

“Buddhism is for everyone. Buddhism is the universal religion. It can be put into practice by any in every age and era. People everywhere have the same problem: to free themselves from suffering, suffering which is inherent in birth, aging, pain, and death, suffering which stems from desire and grasping. . . . Buddhism offers a way out of this universal dilemma.”



“One does not have to go off to live in the forest. . . . It is not a matter of committing suicide or going off to live as a hermit or destroying everything. Outwardly one is as usual, behaving quite normally with respect to things. Inwardly, however, there is a difference. The mind is independent and free, no longer a slave to things. This is the virtue of insight. The Buddha called this effect deliverance, escape from slavery to things, in particular, to the things we like [or dislike].”



“In Dhamma language hell is *anxiety*, anxiety that burns us just like a fire.”



“We have ourselves, we make use of ourselves, we train ourselves, and we do things connected with ourselves every day without knowing anything about ourselves, without being able to handle adequately problems concerning ourselves. . . . Let us set about studying Buddha-Dhamma [or doctrine] by getting to know our own true nature.”

# TOWARD THE TRUTH

Books by DONALD K. SWEARER  
Published by THE WESTMINSTER PRESS

*Toward the Truth*, by Buddhadāsa,  
edited by Donald K. Swearer  
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# TOWARD THE TRUTH

by BUDDHADĀSA, Bhikkhu, 1906-  
edited by Donald K. Swearer



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## PREFACE

THERE ARE few contemporary Asian Buddhists who are well known in the West. D. T. Suzuki is probably the most famous, although he is no longer living. He has done more to popularize Zen in the West than has any other single individual. Among others in this category many are Westerners living in Asia, such as Nyāṇaponika Thera, a German bhikkhu (monk) residing in Ceylon. The paucity of information about contemporary Buddhist thinkers, especially those within the monastic community or priesthood (Sangha) greatly limits our understanding of the Buddhism taught and practiced in Asia today. This shortcoming, however, is not unique. Every age lacks the perspective of history on its own men and movements, a problem enhanced when we examine differing cultures, languages, and religions.

This problem is particularly acute regarding Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian Buddhism has been studied in recent years by anthropologists and sociologists, but few have attempted to present it from the perspective of its own self-understanding. Of course, some argue that modern Theravāda Buddhism has not produced any noteworthy intellectuals, whereas others contend that Theravāda

monks offer no significant interpretations of traditional doctrinal formulations. Both positions are inaccurate and question-begging.

The present volume attempts to contribute to an understanding of contemporary Theravāda Buddhism by presenting translations from the writings of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa, widely acclaimed in Thailand as that country's most provocative intellectual in the Buddhist Sangha. Buddhādāsa is a prolific writer and speaker, and the chapters in this volume only begin to touch the depth of his thought. Some of his most important, longer works remain to be translated. We present the following selections from Buddhādāsa's writings, however, in the hope that it will make a contribution toward meeting an obvious need in the area of Buddhist studies.

The works included here have been translated by a variety of hands. I have taken the liberty to delete, revise, and edit where necessary, but only for the purposes of clarity and coherence. To the best of my judgment, at no point have I altered the substance or the essential meaning of the material. Short deletions which occur throughout some of the chapters (notably Chapter IV) have not been indicated in order not to detract from the text itself. The Introduction draws not only on the translations included but on several other of Buddhādāsa's writings, including *Tua Kuu Kong Kuu* and *Khon Thyng Tham, Tham Thyng Khon*.

The author wishes to express special thanks to Bhikkhu Ariyānanda for allowing me to use his excellent translations of "Everyday Language and Dhamma Language" and "Handbook for Mankind," and for encouraging me in the pursuit of this volume; to Bhikkhu Nāgasena, the translator of "Toward the Truth of Buddhism,"

for several informative conversations at Wat Benchama-bopitr, Bangkok; to the Sublime Life Mission in Bangkok for permission to use and edit the materials in this volume; and to the Thailand Theological Seminary which, with the Chiangmai Buddhist Association, sponsored my lecture "Buddhism, Christianity, and Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa" in Chiangmai, Thailand, in 1968. My debt to Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa himself goes without saying. The week that I spent with him at Mokkhabalārāma, Chaiya, Thailand, helped me to understand Buddhadāsa not only as a thinker and a writer but as a dedicated person with a profound sense of purpose and mission. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the support of the Danforth Foundation and the Society for Religion in Higher Education whose grants made possible my trip to Asia in 1967-1968.

D.K.S.

# I

## INTRODUCTION: BUDDHADĀSA—"SERVANT OF THE BUDDHA"

ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE a religious genius comes along. Sometimes he is acclaimed in his own lifetime, but often as not, he is a prophet "without honor in his own country." On occasion the religious genius is a man of towering intellect, or he may be simply a man of insight and spiritual wisdom. He may play the role of religious reformer or he may live the life of a quiet recluse, sought out by those whose inspiration depends on the wise-inholiness. The religious genius, in brief, assumes many forms and plays many roles, but in all cases he provides the *élan vital* of a religious tradition. Whether patriarch or pope, mystic or heretic, the religious genius recalls the tradition back to its creative roots, summoning it to live out its faith within the dynamic of the present. Hence, the religious genius plays the roles of prophet and reformer, saint and seer. Every age benefits from such a man and our own is no exception. One hopes only that our perceptions have not become so dulled in the modern day that the religious genius passes by unnoticed and without recognition. Woe to the generation for which this is the case!

The chapters contained in this book are the writings,

some would contend, of a religious genius. He has been recognized in his own country, Thailand, as being one of the most important figures in the Buddhist Sangha (monastic order), even though he has not gained a position of power within the monastic hierarchy. His fame rests, rather, on other qualities: the power of his intellect and the depth of his religious insight. Indeed, it has been observed by some that he is a *sotāpanna*, or "stream winner," the first stage of Buddhist sainthood. He is a man who hardly looks like a saint, for he is somewhat unimpressive in appearance and eschews either power or publicity. Yet the look in his eye, the ready smile, and the sharpness of mind are evidence of religious genius and recall to mind Søren Kierkegaard's observation that the spiritual man is not easily discernible from the "butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker."

Something of the character of Buddhadāsa is indicated by the very name he has taken, for it means "Servant of the Buddha." Interestingly enough, it is not his ordained name but one by which he prefers to be called. In the West we have long since given up the practice of taking names for the meaning they contain, but in the East, and especially in the case of Buddhadāsa, the meaning of the name illustrates something of the character or the quality of being of the man. Buddhadāsa, in his unique way, sees himself as a servant of the Lord Buddha not in a narrow, sectarian manner but as a vehicle through which the universal truths of the Buddha's teachings might reach man. His service, then, is not simply to the Lord Buddha but to mankind.

Buddhadāsa<sup>1</sup> was born in 1906 in Chaiya, South Thailand, a son of a merchant family. Unlike many Thai youths entering the monastic life, Buddhadāsa was not



ordained as a novice but entered the Sangha at the age of twenty-one. After finishing the traditional levels of monastic study, and teaching for a short time, he followed the pattern of withdrawal and preparation set by Gotama the Buddha. He retired to the forest for a period of six years to meditate and study the scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism, the form of Buddhism practiced in Thailand, Ceylon, and other parts of Southeast Asia. He is reputed to have adopted a life of total isolation, seeing no one even to the point of having his brother leave his food hanging from a tree every day. Eventually he returned to a more normal monastic life and was appointed to head a temple in Chaiya, once an important center of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. During the past decade, however, he has devoted the bulk of his energy to the establishment of a forest hermitage several miles outside of Chaiya.

If a religious genius is indicated by the number of followers he has attracted, Buddhādāsa would not rank very high. The forest hermitage, appropriately entitled "The Garden of Salvation" (*Mokkhabalārāma*), has places for only about forty monks. Yet he has won the support and admiration of some of the most influential lay Buddhists in Thailand, including the president of the Thailand Buddhist Association, as well as such important Thai monks as Bhikkhu Paññānanda. Furthermore, Buddhādāsa is widely recognized in both lay and monastic circles as a brilliantly creative interpreter of Buddha-Dhamma, or Buddhist doctrine. His position is not without dispute, however. A few years ago an attempt was made to discredit him as a Communist, and there are devout and informed Buddhists who strongly disagree with his interpretation of Buddhism. In particular, there are those who



believe that in an attempt to universalize the message of the Buddha, Buddhadāsa is not faithful enough to traditional Theravāda doctrine; furthermore, he does not endear himself to teachers of the Abhidhamma, the more technical philosophy of Buddhism, by such claims that they try to climb the tree of Buddhism from the top down.

Part of the genius of Buddhadāsa is his ability to bridge the old and the new, to synthesize traditional formulations of doctrine with fresh insights derived from personal experience. As the Bangkok publisher of "Toward the Truth of Buddhism" stated it: "The Buddha stressed that both the literal meaning of the words of his Dhamma (doctrine) and their underlying spirit are to be taken into account. Some Buddhists have the tendency only to notice the former and ignore the latter. Other schools have repeatedly emphasized the spirit of Buddhist practice. These two tendencies, long a cause of contention in the Buddhist world, appear now to be united again in the Dhamma-presentation of the Venerable Buddhadāsa."

Readers of these chapters will be impressed with the synthetic approach of Buddhadāsa. For one even only superficially familiar with Theravāda doctrine the cardinal teachings of no-self or nonessentiality (*anattā*), transience and impermanence (*anicca*), and suffering (*dukkha*) seem to leap from the pages. Also even some of the more technical aspects of Buddhist thought typical of such encyclopedic works as Buddhaghosa's classic Path of Purity (*Visuddhimagga*), written in the fifth century, are abundantly evidenced in portions of the chapter "Handbook for Mankind." Schooled in the Theravāda scriptures, Buddhadāsa clearly seeks to reinterpret traditional doctrines, as is illustrated in these pages as well as in other writings. For example, he renders the classic for-

mula of the Four Noble Truths as: (1) *Nature*, that which changes and that which does not, is devoid of essence; (2) the *law of nature* is that we are attached to things and thereby experience suffering; (3) our *duty* in the face of this fact is to act in such a way as to be freed from the consequences of our actions; (4) as a *result*, our life in this world will be happy and free from worry because we have no attachment to things as "mine."<sup>2</sup> This interpretation is not radically different from the traditional Theravāda statement, but there are subtle variations, especially in terms of the fourth truth.

Buddhadāsa, on the one hand, remains loyal to the *spirit* of traditional Theravāda ideas within the framework of a vocabulary derived not only from Buddhist scriptures but also from his own personal experience and cultural history. On the other hand, moreover, the synthetic nature of Buddhadāsa's approach allows him to go beyond the confines of Theravāda doctrine. For instance, in recent years the concept of "emptiness" or "the void" (*suññatā*) has been one of the focal categories of his thought (cf. Chapter III). *Suññatā* is part of the Theravāda tradition, although a relatively minor part. The term is most important in the Prajñāpāramitā literature of the Mahāyāna tradition and in the thought of Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika philosophical school which has had a profound influence on the Zen (Ch'an) tradition. As Buddhadāsa discusses the term in the chapter "Everyday Language and Dhamma Language," it is closely related to the key Buddhist notion of "nonselfhood" (*anattā*): "This highest Dhamma, the truth of nonselfhood or emptiness, makes a man immortal because it makes him free of the 'self' idea. When there is no self, how can there be death? So, in Dhamma lan-

guage, the elixir of life is the truth of nonselfhood or emptiness." In other words, for Buddhadāsa the concept of emptiness is the best expression to indicate that state of nonattachment, nongrasping, and nonego characteristic of the person who has attained the *summum bonum*, or Nibbāna. It is interesting to note that at his forest hermitage outside of Chaiya, Buddhadāsa has constructed a modern "spiritual theater," where the central symbol dominating the room is a large white circle embodying the truth that ultimate reality is beyond all polarities and distinctions characteristic of ordinary levels of understanding. The ultimately real is empty, not in the sense that it is vacuous, but in that it transcends any attempt to dichotomize or conceptualize it. The term *suññatā*, then, has the virtue of *functioning* as a nonverbal indicator of an ontological truth, and in this sense would be equivalent to the silence of the mystic. Moreover, it also offers the strong axiological intent of negating the cause of selfish acts, namely, the self: "The world is empty. Empty of what? Empty of self and belonging to self. Everything is allowed to exist as long as it is not regarded as 'me' or 'mine.'"

The synthetic genius of Buddhadāsa is further illustrated by the nature of his forest hermitage. It combines the traditional with the modern in a variety of ways. The monks who reside there emulate more nearly than many Buddhists in robes the life-style of the early monks in India. That is, they live in small, relatively isolated dwellings spread throughout a wooded hillside of over 150 acres. The focus of the hermitage, however, is a modern building which Buddhadāsa refers to as a "spiritual theater." It provides an auditorium for lectures but is used

primarily as an audio-visual center where Buddhism is propagated through paintings, bas-reliefs, and films. The exterior walls are covered with reproductions of some of the earliest Buddhist stonework in India at Sānchi, Bhārhut, and Amarāvati. On the interior walls, by way of contrast, are modern murals from a variety of religious traditions, including Zen Buddhism and Christianity. The physical surroundings of Buddhadāsa's center offer a vivid illustration of his mission: to propagate the essential truths of Buddhism through means most appropriate to the modern age. To accomplish this mission Buddhadāsa finds it imperative to bridge the old and the new.

It is difficult to determine whether or not Buddhadāsa's approach to Buddhism in particular or to religion in general causes him to gloss over essential differences between Buddhism and other religions. Thus, for instance, in his essay "No Religion!" he says: "If . . . a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (Dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he should go on to a deeper understanding of Dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute Truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion—that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam." In 1967 Buddhadāsa delivered a series of lectures at the Protestant seminary in Thailand (Thailand Theological Seminary in Chiangmai) which disturbed some Buddhists and Christians for the reason that, in their opinion, he did not take the differences between the two traditions seriously enough. One Christian re-

marked that if what Buddhādāsa had to say were widely accepted, Christianity in Thailand would be put out of business.

To the above kind of charge a number of observations must be made regarding Buddhādāsa's point of view. It is true that for Buddhādāsa all religions are similar; however, their similarity is based primarily on two shared characteristics: their understanding of the human condition and the nature of ultimate reality. With regard to the nature of the human condition Buddhādāsa says: "Every human being, no matter in what country he belongs, or what language he speaks, or what religion he professes, has but one universal problem, namely, overcoming evil or mental impurity or defilements. That which is called evil or mental impurity is to be found in each individual. It does not belong to or is not the problem of one particular religion only; each individual professing any religion has the problem of overcoming evil. As such, the way to solve this problem must be one that can be used by every human being. The way or instrument to destroy evil is named 'religion,' therefore true religion or religion in essence is universal in its application. The belief that there are literally many religions is something meaningful only in the eyes of those who see only the outer forms, or view religion only superficially. There are different outer forms or embodiments of religion, but every religion or what is embodied in different forms of religion is but one and the same thing."<sup>3</sup>

For Buddhādāsa all religions share the same, fundamental soteriological purpose: the overcoming of evil, impurity, defilements, and sin which characterize the human condition. The ways in which this condition is described may differ, and the theological conceptions in



relationship to which the human condition is viewed may also vary, but all religions see man in some sort of profane state. Also, this profane state is seen as evil, impure, defiled, or sinful in relationship to some higher good. Therefore, a religion is fundamentally "a system of observation and practice which binds man to the highest thing."<sup>4</sup> Man, then, in Buddhādāsa's understanding is in tension between the profane and the sacred. He is bound by the profane but strives to sacralize his profane existence. This striving is, in Buddhādāsa's definition, what all religions are about.

The sacred state is, in essence, the ultimately real. All religions share the same goal, namely, the attainment of this real. Precisely because the goal is ultimate reality it is, by definition, beyond description; hence, those terms which are least denotative, such as "emptiness" (*suññatā*) or "the true nature of things" (*dhamma*), are most successful at pointing toward the Truth itself. It is this viewpoint which lies behind Buddhādāsa's notion of "ordinary language" and "Dhamma language" described in Chapter III. This distinction is rooted in the traditional Theravāda conception of "conventional" (*vohāra* or *sammuti*) and "ultimate" (*paramattha*) language and implies, in his approach, two levels of understanding. For the person who "sees" or understands the truth about the nature of things, language is no longer bound simply by sensorily perceived referents; rather, it becomes a vehicle expressive of the Truth that has been seen or understood.

There are, indeed, dangers in this approach. It may become a vehicle for an uncritical lack of appreciation of the distinctiveness of religious traditions. For instance, one could criticize Buddhādāsa's understanding of Christianity at several points in his lectures at the Thailand

Theological Seminary. It might, furthermore, lead to an unduly subjective or arbitrary interpretation of a religious tradition if many of its historical and cultural aspects are written off as conventional or relative. On the other hand, if this approach is used as a means to provoke and awaken a religion from its "dogmatic slumbers" and to call into question the relevance and meaning of outdated forms, then Buddhādāsa's understanding of the nature of religion bears a great deal of validity. Upon reading these chapters one will probably conclude that Buddhādāsa has gone in both directions at once. It may be that in the process of recalling not only Buddhism but other religions as well to their essential truths about the nature of human existence and the quest for the ultimately real, Buddhādāsa's genius has led him to a kind of synthetic eclecticism. A fairer judgment would be, however, that Buddhādāsa's sense of mission at this particular time in the history of Thai Buddhism has made his orientation less that of the analytical expositor and more that of the visionary prophet or spokesman.

Our comments up to this point have focused on Buddhādāsa's understanding of Buddhism and religion but not so much on the kind of critique he offers. It appears that in general he is critical of anything standing in the way of the fulfillment of the primary soteriological purpose of religion. Hence, in regard to Thai Buddhism, he castigates those monks who would practice the magical arts of fortune-telling or soothsaying for their own ends and he looks askance at a mechanistic use of merit-making that aims at the attainment of an immediate reward. Buddhādāsa is critical not only of various practices identified with Thai Buddhism, however. Of even greater concern to him is the depth of the misunderstanding of cen-

tral Buddhist ideas and ideals which typifies so many people calling themselves Buddhists. This concern underlies the entirety of Chapter III, where he observes that most Buddhists think religion refers simply to temples, monastery buildings, pagodas, and saffron-robed monks rather than to that which provides man with the fundamental sustenance to bring about the end of suffering. Religion does not necessarily thrive, contends Buddhādāsa, when there is visible, material progress but when the Truth is serving man as the ground of his being.

Buddhadāsa's critique of Buddhism is not only a negative, broadside attack against erroneous practices and distorted doctrines, but it is rooted in the positive assertion that man is fundamentally religious and that religion is to serve and fulfill this aspect of man's nature. Hence, Buddhism must be dynamic, continually growing as man himself develops. Once Buddhism, or another religion for that matter, becomes a sterile system it stagnates and loses its vitality. For this reason religion is centered on man and his quest for the ultimately real. Buddhism is not fundamentally a theoretical system but a *way* to attain the *summum bonum*. As the Introduction to the Thai publication of "Toward the Truth of Buddhism" puts it, Buddhādāsa's explanations of Buddhism successfully relate "cosmic law" and "moral order." "The difficulty with most people is that they know Buddha-Dhamma in a theoretical way but fail to understand its application in their life. In this way the teaching of the Great Master (i.e., the Buddha) is reduced to something which is only read, discussed or argued about but quite neglecting its eminently useful applications. Buddha-Dhamma is a way of life; so, it is to be lived and not to be only studied or discussed."



Buddha-Dhamma as a way of life has many dimensions, but one that the following chapters highlight is the importance of personal experience leading to insight. In Chapter II and again in Chapter V, Buddhādāsa discusses the ways by which insight into the Truth of Buddhism is gained. It is interesting to note that he does not insist on the formal meditation procedures taught in the Pāli scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism, as the section on the natural way of gaining insight illustrates. Yet, his expositions about controlling the mind, breathing meditation, and the means of gaining insight by organized methods are based fundamentally on Theravāda texts and doctrine. The primary concern of Buddhādāsa, however, is not to exposit traditional teachings but to revitalize the tradition in such a manner that it becomes a vehicle rather than a block to the realization of Truth, or Buddha-Dhamma. He may be justly criticized for oversight or even, perhaps, for misrepresentation; however, it behooves the critic of Buddhādāsa to keep the author's intention clearly in mind. One sympathetic Buddhist critic of Buddhādāsa states that he appreciates Buddhādāsa's reformist criticism of institutional Buddhism, his original and imaginative way of expounding against a tendency to stereotyped rigidity, and his stress on direct realization; however, this critic believes that Buddhādāsa does not distinguish clearly enough between his own ideas and traditional Buddhist concepts and terminology (e.g., the notion of ordinary language and Dhamma language).

Perhaps the reply to such a charge is the question whether a religious genius with profound insight into the nature of man as a religious being will not seem to take liberties with the religious tradition with which he is identified. Certainly the history of any religious tradition will

show that some of its greatest spirits, such as an Eckhart in Christianity, have been judged as aberrant in their thinking. They have, nevertheless, infused into the tradition a new life and a new light, summoning those around them to a reexamination of their religion and themselves. Buddhādāsa is performing this function today in Thailand. As such, he is one of the most important monks not only in that country but in Buddhist Asia as a whole. Indeed, he summons not only Buddhists but all of us to reexamine our faith in the light of Dhamma, that is to say, Buddha-Dhamma.

## II

# TOWARD THE TRUTH OF BUDDHISM<sup>5</sup>

WHAT IS THE TRUTH OF BUDDHISM, or the Dhamma of the Buddha? Before dealing with the way to this Truth, we must examine the meaning of the word "Dhamma." Its meanings are various, but at this time I will confine myself to the meaning that has to do with the highest blissful state of mind.

Literally, this word can be translated as *the Dhamma of the Buddha*. In this case it means the teaching of the Buddha, and as such refers to the *pariyatti-dhamma*, or learning of the Scriptures. Secondly, it can be rendered as *the Dhamma that leads to Enlightenment*, that is to say, the way which, when well practiced, makes a worldling into a noble one (*ariya*), free from suffering. It is evident that Dhamma refers here to the *paṭipatti-dhamma*, or the practice according to the Way. Yet in a third sense, this word is translated as *the nature of the Buddha* or "Buddhahood" or the thing that the Buddha attained, that is to say, *ñāṇa*, or wisdom and peace. In this case it refers to the *paṭipatti-dhamma* as the attainment that follows practice. Wisdom and peace are the nature of the Buddha. Wisdom here refers to the supreme knowledge that resolves all doubts, leads to complete spiritual satis-

faction, and brings about the cessation of desires. Peace means purity and tranquillity.

The last translation, that is, the goal or state that the Buddha attained, demands a detailed explanation. Only then can it be more fully understood. To explain it in the most concise way, we can say it means a state of complete freedom and eternal happiness. It is this meaning or sense of the word "Buddha-Dhamma" which we shall emphasize. When we speak of the way to Buddha-Dhamma, bear in mind that by Buddha-Dhamma we mean the goal or state that Siddhattha Gotama attained in becoming a Buddha.

What is the justification for focusing on the last meaning? Why not elaborate upon the first and second meanings, either of learning the teaching, the *pariyatti-dhamma*, or the way of practice, the *paṭipatti-dhamma*? By the *pariyatti-dhamma*, as is generally understood, we mean the study of the whole of the Tipiṭaka (the sacred books of Buddhism containing Lord Buddha's words and those of his disciples). The question for most people will be whether sufficient time is available to devote to their reading and assimilation. As for the *paṭipatti-dhamma*, few men are able to renounce the world to lead a strict religious life. If the Buddha-Dhamma is something to be attained only through learning the Tipiṭaka or through leading a strict monastic life, Buddha-Dhamma will suit only the few. But because Buddha-Dhamma is for the welfare of all, its most important meaning is the attainment of the Buddha. We can all reach this goal without going through the Holy Texts and even without leading a rigorous ascetic life. There is a parallel in regard to worldly attainments. Nearly everyone wants wealth, fame, and wide social contacts. Furthermore, these may be ob-

tained without necessarily having academic qualifications or greatness or even working hard, and when the former are possessed no account is taken of the latter. These three much-desired worldly goals are not limited only to those who are great men. In the same way Buddha-Dhamma is not limited to a select few. It is within the reach of everybody.

*Nāṇa*, or wisdom, is that kind of knowledge which frees man of all desires. Being so, this *nāṇa* can be attained by a person who, after having enjoyed worldly pleasures according to his desires, tires of them. Note that he may never study the Scriptures or lead a strict ascetic life. An *arahant* of this type is called *sukkhavipassaka*, one who, having seen phenomena through "dry" insight as being devoid of essence (*anattā*), is emancipated by wisdom (*paññā-vimutta*). Although an *arahant* like this may not be so well versed in matters of doctrine compared with others, he is perfectly free from evil and is as blessed in his realization as are other types of perfected beings. He has attained calmness or peace where there is no suffering. That calmness is called the tranquil state. Where there is *nāṇa* or wisdom and tranquillity in any person, we say that he has attained Buddha-Dhamma. That which should be done in life has been done by him; nothing is left for him to do. Everyone can attain this meaning of Buddha-Dhamma without studying the Scriptures, without leading the life of an ascetic, or even without undergoing a strict course of meditation.

Moreover, it must be kept in mind that the Buddha did not search for Buddha-Dhamma only for his own sake. Quite to the contrary, he was moved to search for it by his vision of the universal suffering of all beings.

Buddha-Dhamma is, therefore, naturally for all and is within the reach of everyone. It is common to all and exists everywhere. All beings may “touch” Dhamma at any moment. Because of the presence of ignorance and craving, however, there is an inability to perceive this fact, and it appears as something extremely mysterious and impossible to understand.

Normally we have five sense organs, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. These are our instruments for knowing objects in the external world. We quickly but ignorantly deduce that the world is comprised only of things that are known or felt through our five senses, or if there is something else, that it must be of the same nature as these things known or felt by the senses. It is the curtain of our own ignorance that blinds us to the reality beyond the five sense organs and that compels us to judge all truth by the norms and standards set by the senses. For this reason we fail to comprehend anything beyond the five sense spheres.

Because of this natural human tendency we must look inward to understand things as they really are. Our problem rests in the fact that our senses direct us outwardly, thereby limiting what we know to the nature of the objects to which our sense organs are attached. The Truth of Buddhism, in the sense of attainment, however, can be found only by using the correct instruments to focus on inward truths.

All the manifold objects collectively called the world are just those things we can feel or know by our five senses. They form the basis of contact. But the world may be more than this. There may be other things that we cannot perceive or feel. We cannot know by our senses what is beyond the perception of our senses. We

cannot even correctly speculate about such objects. Nevertheless, we can reasonably believe that if there were more sense organs or more delicate ones than we have, we could make contact with and perceive many things never before dreamed of. Suppose, for instance, we had no ears; it would then be impossible for us to have any idea of sounds or of melodious music. But since we have ears, we can make contact with the vibration range of sound. Suppose we had more than five sense organs, say twenty, to make contact with other worlds, then the phenomena that would become perceptible to our senses would be much greater and more varied. We should then meet with things other than form, sound, odor, taste, and tangible objects. At present, however, we know the world only to a limited extent, that is, according to the range of our five sense organs.

Our sense organs can make contact only within certain limits. For example, though the human ear can hear many kinds of sounds, its ability to hear is limited to the vibration range it is fitted to receive. If the frequency of sound waves reaching our ear is higher or lower than these limits, they will pass into the ear, but we will hear nothing at all. Scientific experiments show that the ears of dogs and bats, for instance, can hear sounds having very high frequencies. Such sounds are inaudible to the human ear. There are also some kinds of insects that can see things such as ultraviolet rays which are invisible to the human eye. Such examples could be extended *ad infinitum*.

These illustrations point out that although we have ears and eyes, we are unable to hear some kinds of sounds or to see certain colors which exist in the same way as the sounds and colors perceptible to our senses. The only difference is that of range. We neither pay any

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attention to them nor search for them. In this way we act as though they did not exist. Our senses deceive us to such a degree about the real nature of things that we are often totally mistaken. Some people, for example, firmly believe that visual colors have an essential reality; yet science has proven that color has no essential existence per se. The seeming existence of different colors is dependent on the ability of our eye to pick up various vibrations of light waves, thus giving rise to visual impressions of different colors. The same color may appear to be different to different kinds of creatures, or by some it may not be seen at all. On these grounds we conclude that color as we ordinarily perceive it is an illusion. In the same way, all the five sense organs are liable to arouse the wildest delusions. The physical world itself is mysterious and difficult to understand.

As for Buddha-Dhamma, or the Truth of Buddhism, it is something beyond the sphere of the physical world. We might use the word "metaphysical" to characterize it, and it can only be understood by turning within. It is imperceptible to our senses, including the ordinary mind. We can make contact with it only through meditation, that is, by a mind that is fully and rightly concentrated. If we want to attain Buddha-Dhamma we must see things by looking inward. To see things outwardly has become instinctual with us. We see, for example, a red rose and have an attitude of liking toward it. We are fascinated by its seeming color. Generally, however, we do not have the attitude of mind while seeing roses which enables us to understand that there is no such thing as a red color for which we have so great a fancy. Our mind is mistaken by the seeming color which creates a liking for the rose. This attached or passionate attitude toward things is the



covering that makes us unable to know things as they are.

The moment we do away with this covering, Buddha-Dhamma exists everywhere and is immediately perceived by our mind. Just as an insect covered completely by a coconut shell cannot see the light or feel the air outside but immediately perceives them when the shell is removed, so the technique for attaining Buddha-Dhamma is to destroy completely the strong covering of deluding impressions.

Today many people keep fowls, and everybody has seen a baby chicken hatched alive or sometimes, when it is undeveloped, dead in its shell. The Pāli texts draw an analogy between the baby chicken in its shell and mankind surrounded by and wrapped in a shell of ignorance, liable to die unless the shell is broken. The Vinaya-piṭaka (the Book of Discipline in the Pāli canon) likens the Buddha to the first chicken that emerges from and destroys the eggshell. All the other baby chicks are then hatched safely after him. By this simile the Buddha meant that he was the first to destroy the shell of ignorance in order to attain the Buddha-Dhamma, namely, wisdom and peace. The Truth of Buddhism, then, means the reality that the Buddha discovered, which becomes tangible for us when the hard shell is destroyed by inward-looking.

To see introvertedly in order to attain Buddha-Dhamma we must use a special organ. The special organ required for the purpose is *paññindriya*, the wisdom organ or right-understanding faculty. Our sense organs—namely, eye, ear, tongue, nose, body, and mind—are ordinarily wanting in power to attain Buddha-Dhamma. When, however, these six organs are no longer influenced by craving but are controlled instead by wisdom (*paññā*), they are, so

to speak, transformed into wisdom organs and become valuable instruments for gaining insight. Insight or introversion means penetrating through the worldly phenomena which are the alluring and fascinating screen blinding people from going farther. In whatever direction we look we seldom go beyond the world of the senses. Our sense organs are confined by the encirclement of the world of objects—form, sound, odor, taste, tangible objects, and mental phenomena. People oscillate around these objects, reacting with either like or dislike; hence, these sense organs are usually bereft of any working capacity to attain Buddha-Dhamma. We must, consequently, aim at creating an extra organ that is able to perceive things beyond the world of sense objects by penetrating through to the interior world.

The reality beyond the world is, admittedly, difficult to understand. Some may doubt and question whether it really exists. To say that this reality we seek is "beyond the world" does not mean it is located outside the world. It is, rather, to be understood in relation to this world itself in much the same way as "chair" and the state of "chair-being-absent" are interrelated. We may say that when a chair is removed from its place, there is the state of chair-being-absent at the very spot from which the chair has been removed. Indeed, the state of chair-being-absent is always there whether the chair remains or is removed from its place. We look at the chair but fail to see the state of its being absent, which is nowhere but at the same location. In a like manner we should understand the reality beyond the sensory world. That is, we must look at the world of objects itself but see through interior perception. When we ourselves are involved in or become attached to the world this kind of vision is very difficult to

achieve. We are too much attached to the world of objects, and this attachment forms too strong a covering to give us a chance to come in contact with the Truth of Buddhism, or Buddha-Dhamma.

To understand clearly the transworldly reality or the supramundane state, we should consider it in relation to the world itself. All mundane things, whether material or mental, are produced by causes; that is, their existence depends on other conditions. In the course of time they undergo changes, cease to be, and then appear again. This process of coming into being, changing, and ceasing continues only as long as those conditions or causes necessary for the process itself are there. Consequently, all mundane things are in motion. Their very existence depends on motion. The moment they cease to move, they cease to be. The so-called world is, therefore, nothing but organic and inorganic objects in constant motion. When these conditioned things are dissolved, an unconditioned, indestructible, self-existing state remains which is quite opposite to mundane phenomena in that it is not subject to motion or impermanence. It exists without being in motion. On the whole, therefore, we can divide things into two categories: conditioned, impermanent objects produced by causes and those without motion, free from the process of coming into being and ceasing. The former are called *sankhata-dhamma*, things created by causes, and the latter *asankhata-dhamma*, things uncreated by causes. Anyone who perceives both categories clearly is said to have perceived the Buddha-Dhamma, the Truth that Buddha found. To perceive in this case implies to have the insight or wisdom capable of changing our heart and mind to the extent that we become indifferent and unattached to worldly allurements and understand thor-

oughly the supramundane state our mind has fully attained. In other words, when we see the interior of the mundane things dominating and covering the mind, we are free to see the supramundane state then and there, for both states are relative in much the same way as a chair and the state of chair-being-absent are relative.

To perceive objects only outwardly means to see in terms of their shapes and forms, colors, tastes, and so on. The cause of our liking or disliking stems from this way of seeing things. Such liking or disliking things resembles a cancerous growth. It covers our heart and mind to the point that the light of *lokuttara-dhamma*, the supramundane state, can hardly penetrate. To see introvertedly or to perceive the interior of mundane things, on the other hand, means to see in terms of their true characteristics, which allows us to transcend likes and dislikes.

The essential or true characteristics of mundane things are three in number, namely, impermanence, suffering, and nonself (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*). These general characteristics are visible everywhere in the world. They radiate thousands of times brighter than the sun, but people fail to see this radiance because they look at things in the light of or in terms of likes and dislikes. The moment we do away with preferences arising from attraction, the vision of impermanence, suffering, and nonself becomes apparent to us. The oneness of all things is exposed. All objects—whether form, sound, odor, taste, tangible objects, or mental phenomena—do not appear different in shape, taste, and the like. They are one, inasmuch as they are all impermanent. They come into being and then cease to be. The laws of time and space cause us to see things as having varying degrees of permanence;

however, this is nothing but pure delusion. When we see all phenomena in terms of the harmony of movement of things mutually related by cause and effect until their total dissolution, then the world is truly exposed to us and reduced to its true nature. Nonattachment, nonclinging, and nongrasping result from this insight without any effort on our part. In a similar manner darkness vanishes by itself as soon as a fire is lighted.

The covering that makes the Buddha-Dhamma invisible to us is threefold. The outermost is the attachment to sense objects which deceives people into thinking they possess a permanent treasure. Instinctively our sense organs seek incessant satisfactions. People think they are masters of things, but on the contrary, they are really slaves of their senses. Only by attaining Buddha-Dhamma do we become the real master of our senses. It is imperative to destroy this outermost covering of instinctive attachment to sense objects in order to attain Buddha-Dhamma. Through subjugation of the senses and insight into their vanity this aim is accomplished.

The intermediary covering is attachment to and belief in ideologies, creeds, or cults of one kind or another. Belief is something that a worldling cannot do without. People believe in their teacher's religion, philosophy, or sect as being right and in the beliefs of others as wrong. Any kind of belief is a hindrance to Nibbāna, since Nibbāna implies total nonattachment, including nonattachment to belief. To take refuge in something other than ourselves is an incomparably strong instinct. Even if a man takes refuge and strongly believes in a teacher who teaches him to be unattached, he cannot enjoy nonattachment simply because of his attachment to his belief in the teacher. To believe in the teacher is useful only as far as moral values

are concerned, but it is a hindrance to the higher values of the supramundane state. The Truth of Buddhism, Buddha-Dhamma, Nibbāna, is, as stated in the Pāli texts, unconditioned and independent, for it does not depend on any agency for its creation, existence, or destruction. The mundane world of sensory objects has no meaning if it is not seen as enduring in time and extending in space. By contrast, Buddha-Dhamma in our special sense of attainment has nothing to do with time and space. It is timeless and not located in space. It can only be perceived with the eye of spiritual insight. As the Truth of Buddhism is independent or free from any agency for its existence so the mind of the person who wants to attain it must be likewise free. He must be free from worldly allurements, free from any kind of belief that confines wisdom to a limited approach. If a man cannot maintain this freedom, he cannot attain the Buddha-Dhamma, for to attain what is free necessitates being free. We find the Buddha speaking in the Kālāma Sutta, Anguttara Nikāya,<sup>6</sup> to the effect that one should not believe anything simply because it has been handed down from time immemorial, because one has heard testimony to the effect, because it is written in the Scriptures, or because one's teacher says it is true. The Buddha teaches us to believe in ourselves, to embark on a free inquiry into Truth, that is to say, to believe after having seen the Truth ourselves. In fact, when we have seen the Truth ourselves, the question of believing does not arise. It should be called "recognition of truth" instead. Truth is to be *seen* and not to be believed. Seeing is believing. But believing is not seeing. If we can rely on belief, we cannot see the Truth.

Someone may then ask: "Why should we take the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha) <sup>7</sup> as a refuge?



Is it a hindrance for attaining Buddha-Dhamma?" I confirm that it is. It is only morally useful and results in the attainment of a heavenly abode. There is, however, no refuge afforded by the state of nonattachment. The state of nonattachment of the *ariya*, or worthy ones, is one and the same. They cannot be a mutual refuge for one other. Even the relationship between teacher and pupil is transformed into the state of being a "good friend." The Buddha teaches us to be *attasaraṇa*, or to take refuge only in oneself. The Buddha merely points out the way. It is up to us to follow it for our own liberation. To take refuge in the Buddha has some meaning in the lower stages of worldly life, since at that stage a person is unable to take refuge in himself or to give up, ultimately, all refuges whatsoever. The Dhamma, or teaching, is like a raft or boat, and to practice the Dhamma is like sailing the boat to reach the other shore of liberation or nonattachment. The man who must take refuge in the boat of Dhamma is the man who has not yet reached the other shore. He takes refuge insofar as he is not liberated. Eventually even attachment to the raft of Dhamma must be eliminated. At that point we arrive at genuine nonattachment. In this manner the intermediate covering of belief no longer limits our freedom.

The last or innermost covering is to believe in oneself. It is rather difficult to understand how the Buddha can teach a person to take refuge in himself or to believe in himself and then say that such a belief is also a covering. To understand this teaching one must know what the self is.

The idea of "self" or "I" results from the instincts of the man who is engrossed in ignorance. These instincts lead to the conception of self, which in turn gives rise to

feelings of love of self, love for life, fear, and anxiety. As long as man is engrossed in ignorance he can never know what the self or the "I" really is. He can never know that in the absolute sense there is no self, that there are only ongoing processes of natural phenomena, giving rise to conceptions of "I" and "my." Ordinarily a man cannot point out his self. In some cases people may refer to the mind as self. When a man is hurt he says that *he* is hurt, instead of saying that the hand is hurt or the leg is hurt. When a person loves someone he says, "*I* am in love," whereas, truly speaking, such love is a kind of illusion dominating the mind, rooted in the misconception of existent selves. When the eye sees form or the ear hears sound one thinks, "*I* see" or "*I* hear." In fact, the act of seeing or hearing is the result of contact between eye or ear consciousness and the form or sound outside, with eye or ear as mediator. The act of seeing or hearing is a natural process that goes on in accordance with mental laws or in harmony with the working of natural phenomena. "Self," or the idea of "I" and "my," is only a conventional truth. In the absolute sense there is no self. We use "I" or "my" only as a conventional mode of speaking necessary for mundane activities as well as for our efforts to attain Buddha-Dhamma. The difference between a worldly and an enlightened person is that the former misconceives "I" as something real whereas the latter knows it is unreal and is used only for conventional purposes.

You may think, "If there is no real self or 'I,' who is it that wants to practice the way leading to the cessation of suffering, or who wants to attain Buddha-Dhamma?" If there is no self, then for whom does one practice Dhamma? The answer is that this notion or clinging to

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"I" is necessary only for those who are not yet free from suffering or who have not attained Buddha-Dhamma. The state of complete freedom from suffering and the feeling of "I" or self cannot coexist in the same mind or the same person. Where there is a state of freedom from suffering, there is no "I" who wants to be free, and where there is a self or "I" who wants to be free from suffering or to attain Buddha-Dhamma, there is no freedom from suffering nor attainment of Truth. To put it in another way, to be free from suffering is to destroy the very misconception of "I" or self who wants to be free from suffering. To think in terms of self or "I" is the most subtle innermost covering. It is very difficult to gain insight into, because it is suffering itself. It is like the fish swimming in water of which it has no awareness.

Everyone who wants to free himself of suffering is like an unhatched chick in a twisted form. A man who ignorantly takes "I" or self as real is confined in the egoistic and therefore twisted realm of the imagination, thinking that whatever may be the situation there must be an ego, self, or soul that belongs to him. Even if a man has freed himself from the first two coverings of worldly allurements and different kinds of beliefs, he is not yet free from the idea of "I" and "my." He takes the five aggregates (*khandha*)—body, feeling, perception, mental coefficients, and consciousness—as his own. Not only that, he even takes birth, old age, pain, and death as his own. But when he comes to know that there is a state called Nibbāna that is unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed, free from birth, old age, pain, and death, there arises a desire in him to attain that state of Nibbāna. As a result, he clings to it as his own self or soul. He does

not understand that after the idea of self or soul is done away with, birth, old age, pain, and death cease also, and that there remain only pure natural phenomena, namely, solid, fluid, heating, and vibrating elements. We misunderstand their natural processes in terms of birth, old age, pain, and death. Desire to attain Nibbāna, if misunderstood in terms of a self or soul free from birth, old age, and death, is a kind of craving called the craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*). To understand Nibbāna in terms of self or soul is ignorance (*avijjā*). To attain Buddha-Dhamma, the Truth of Buddhism, it is indispensable to destroy attachment to the idea of a self.

Now, having dealt with the meaning of Buddha-Dhamma and the threefold covering that conceals it, we come to the point at issue: How is this threefold covering destroyed? This constitutes the way toward the Buddha's Truth.

Buddhism begins with the premise that salvation is to be worked out individually. Individuals who free themselves are of two kinds: *cetovimutta*, those who gain emancipation through the power of concentration, and *paññāvimutta*, those who gain emancipation through the power of understanding or insight. The former develop their mental faculties through meditation and lead a strict life. They are generally those who have renounced the world to lead the life of a bhikkhu (monk). The latter are those who cannot gain freedom in this way because they are wanting in some faculties such as willpower. They do not develop concentration (*samatha-bhāvanā*), but they do develop insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) by constantly, closely, and earnestly observing their own lives and environment. Both types of individuals attain Bud-

dha-Dhamma. The only difference is that the former, in addition to the attainment of Buddha-Dhamma, gain supernatural powers and become a visual example of this Truth. Both, however, are equally called *arahant*-s, the sanctified ones. The former kind of *arahant* is one possessing six branches of supernormal knowledge, and the latter is called the "dry-visioned" or "dry-insight" worker, but there is no difference between them with regard to their attainment of the *summum bonum*.

One can attain Buddha-Dhamma either by first developing *jhāna* (trance states) or by developing bare or dry insight according to one's own aptitude. The first method of developing *jhāna* would require too lengthy an explanation; therefore, we shall deal with the second method of developing insight, for it can also be universally applied. Before one can begin this enterprise one must have a strong conviction as to the ideal of life or perfect manhood. Such a conviction will abet the attainment of Buddha-Dhamma.

We have six faculties—seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, and thinking—that we can make use of in our life. The question is, however, To what purpose shall we use them? People usually use these faculties to gain material things such as wealth, glory, fame, and wide social contacts. There are only a few who use them to gain Buddha-Dhamma or who attempt through insight to see the world as it really is. Enjoyable as the materialistic ideal of life is to the majority, it is not the perfect life, for it is tainted by all kinds of suffering. Life has a spiritual aspect also. If a man enjoys life to the full, that is, pursues material pleasures to the utmost, he is only semi-human. To be a fulfilled human being, to enjoy perfect manhood, he must be spiritually perfect.

## HOW TO CONTROL THE MIND

Those who cannot control their mind constantly find it difficult to see into the world insightfully. To train the mind or to get control over the mind is not only the most important way to gain insight but also a simple process. Few people care to undertake it, however, for it seems to be overly difficult and beyond the power of the materialistic-minded man of our age. It is simple because the mind can be trained step by step if one earnestly wants to do so, in the same way that a person can develop his body by proper exercise. As we have often heard, the mind is fickle and flighty, quite resembling a monkey. In order to subjugate the monkey, the trainer ties the monkey to a strong stake. To train the mind there must likewise be a stake or focal ground. The most commonly known point of focus or subject of meditation, which the Buddha himself practiced and praised, is *ānāpānasati*, mindfulness of breathing. It is convenient and produces a calm state. We can practice it anywhere and at any time. With this meditation subject, inhalation and exhalation are the points on which the mind is fixed. *Sati* (mindfulness) may be likened to a rope that ties the mind to the stake of breathing. *Sampajañña*, or discrimination, is like the trainer's whip which prevents the mind from going its own way. Unless one is negligent, the rope of mindfulness will remain unbroken, and the mind, like the monkey tied with a rope, will not get loose to leap into the jungle of sense objects.

The uncontrolled mind is like a wild animal. For example, an elephant that is caught to be tamed dashes to and fro trying to wrench himself free, sometimes so vio-



lently that the rope cuts into its flesh. When it was in the jungle it did not behave in this violent manner, as it was not then subject to any restraint; nor when it is well tamed does it behave fiercely, but becomes gentle. In the same way the mind does not show its ferocious nature while enjoying sense objects. When it is tied up to the post of *ānāpānasati*, however, it dashes to and fro in such a dreadful manner that many a man is discouraged, so much so that he thinks that he is unfit for meditation. Before applying mindfulness to control the mind, therefore, one should realize that for the mind to try to free itself is natural, just as it is for a wild elephant while it is being trained or tamed.

This process of controlling the mind is technically called *samādhi* (concentration) or *samatha* (the development of tranquillity). It results in making the mind calm, pleasing, tractable, and workable for higher training. The next step is to apply this tranquilized mind to observe all events (*dhamma*) in order to gain the penetrating insight to enable one to be unattached or freed from grasping. This application of mind is technically called *vipassanā-bhāvanā*, or insight development, and finally results in the attainment of *magga-phala*, the Noble Path and the Noble Fruition. It is in this stage of attainment that a man secures supramundane and enduring peace.

### BREATHING MINDFULNESS

The following is a brief account of breathing as a meditation subject. The very first step of directing mindfulness toward the meditation subject of breathing is like the coupling of two things. This is technically called *vi-*

*takka*, conceptual thought or applied thought. By *vitakka*, or conceptual thought, is not meant thinking from a logical standpoint. It actually means a state of mindfulness directed toward an object, in this case breathing, without any reasoning. The state when the mind, by the power of *sampajañña*, clear comprehension, is unswervingly associated with or involved in the subject of meditation is called *vicāra*, sustained thought. Like *vitakka*, *vicāra* also does not mean logical thinking. Rather, it is simply the unswerving association of the mind with breathing. If *vitakka* and *vicāra* are compared to the simile of taming a monkey, the former is like tying the monkey to the post and the latter is like the state of the monkey being held to the post.

This first state of *vitakka-vicāra*, applied thought and sustained thought, is called "the preliminary work." When it is maintained for some time, it will result in a satisfying mental state technically called *pīti*, or rapture. In this state of rapture one feels physically light. The body gradually becomes calm and cool until one feels as if it did not exist. Breathing also slows down to the extent that one feels as if there were no breathing. The nerves are freed from strain. This rapture is also accompanied by a feeling of joy called *sukha*, or happiness. In maintaining the equanimity of this feeling, the mind stops wandering and the rope of mindfulness is freed from its tugs and pulls. This state of equanimity has been developing from the very beginning. Now, however, it has to be developed still further until the mind is absolutely concentrated on the single object of breathing. When this is accomplished, meditation attains the first stage of perfection. The state of mind so concentrated is called *ekaggatā*, or one-pointedness. When these five

factors of meditation—applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness—are in complete harmony, the mind-training is partly completed and is technically called the first absorption or trance (*jhāna*). One can develop insight, *vipassanā*, on the foundation of this first absorption. Even if one does not strive for the second, third, or the fourth *jhāna*, one can still attain supramundane happiness or the bliss of Nibbāna.

Is such attainment beyond one's power? If strong courage is rightly exercised, it is not so difficult. Everyone is capable of attaining the first absorption. There are men of high willpower who not only are able to attain the fourth absorption but also can attain the four immaterial absorptions (*arūpa-jhāna*), the last of which is the highest and most subtle possible stage of mind-training. For the development of insight, however, such a high degree of concentration is not necessary. The majority of people attain Buddha-Dhamma through insight development and not through the development of concentration. We know from the biographies of the *arahant*-s, the passionless ones, that in most cases, after having trained their minds to the stage of only the first absorption (and in many cases even without attaining the first absorption), they could attain the *summum bonum*.

Breathing mindfulness is, in particular, the most suitable form of meditation for most people. Let us examine it in its most simple form. When we direct our mindfulness toward breathing, we are aware that our breath goes in and comes out. The first step is to notice the pattern or rhythm of our breathing and where the center of our breath seems to be. We should do this in a natural way without the use of any force. When the breathing is thus

observed it becomes soft and delicate, thereby calming our body. If the breathing occurs too softly to be observed, we should resume a heavier breath until we have reached normal breathing again and are able to fix our mindfulness on the regularity of our in-breaths and out-breaths. The second step is to fix mindfulness only on breathing's gate, or the nostrils, and to feel as if there were a tender wound there. We must not now be attentive to inhalation and exhalation but simply feel the touch of the in- and out-breathing at the nostrils. This step can be understood by the simile of a gatekeeper. Just as a gatekeeper has the duty of examining people only at the gate, with no concern about what they do and where they go after having entered or gone out by the gate, so, too, we are to fix mindfulness not on in- and out-breaths but only on the gate, on the nostrils where breathing initially touches and departs. We do so in order to soften and calm the breathing.

The breathing, as observed in the preceding steps, is called "the sign of preliminary work." This sign of preliminary practice is the breath-air itself and must be distinguished from the following "acquired sign" which arises in a state called *upacāra-samādhi*, or access concentration. The acquired sign is merely a conception or something imagined, an imitation of the breath-air itself, and is an outcome of the mind's familiarity with breathing. This mental image is distinguished by great flexibility and activity.

When the acquired sign is well maintained it tends to be still, and the mind is calmed. It may then begin to change in shape. How big or small it appears, how beautiful it is, or where it is placed differs among individuals. To some, this mental image appears as a white circle in

front of their face, or as a huge moon in the sky or on the top of a tree or in the nostril. These shapes depend on particular individuals and their unique idiosyncracies. Eventually, after having taken some particular shape and locus, this mental image becomes invariable and unchanging. At this stage the mind, like a well-tamed monkey, becomes peaceful and calm. One feels showered with bliss, owing to the permeation of a feeling of happiness. One notices applied and sustained thoughts, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness being present in complete harmony with the mind, as described previously. At this level the mind can be directed to the highest penetrating insight. Here the mind moves from the acquired sign or mental image to the "absorption sign" which transcends mental images. The moment we arrive at this stage, the mind is completely freed from the unwholesome mental objects which are technically called the five *nīvaraṇa*-s or mental hindrances of lust, ill will, torpor and sloth, restlessness and mental worry, and doubt. This taste of meditation is powerful enough to check all unwholesome phenomena and create a calm satisfaction.

### THE FRUIT OF MEDITATION

The fruit of meditation is twofold. The first fruit is a new kind of happiness that we have never experienced before. This happiness is not based on sense objects which can only stimulate an emotional happiness leading to suffering. The happiness derived from meditation is inexpressibly cool or calm. We may say that it is like tasting the attainment of Nibbāna or of freedom from the defilements. Although Nibbāna has not yet been attained, this happiness may presumably be compared to

its foretaste, the only differences being those of subtlety and quantity. This is the first fruit of meditation. It is technically called *ditṭha-dhammikattha* or immediate profit. If a person's energy is exhausted after having reached this stage, his effort will not be totally in vain.

With the second fruit of meditation the mind reaches a penetrating insight into all phenomena, for practicing meditation is like sharpening a knife for exact cutting or like polishing a glass so as to see clearly. A well-trained mind is amenable like a tame monkey or elephant. It is active, strong, and unwavering under the impulses of passion, anger, hate, and envy. Such a mind cannot be overpowered by these defilements. Instead of succumbing to their power, the meditator laughs with the certain knowledge that the well-trained mind cannot be distracted.

When your mind is endowed with these two fruits of meditation, immediate profit and penetrating insight, you see the world through inward sight. Henceforth nothing in the world can attack you through your sense organs. Nothing can lead the eye, nose, ear, tongue, or body into temptation. The mind will be freed from all kinds of attachments. All worldly objects or allurements will appear to be ludicrous and can be laughed away. You will feel as if the world as a whole were reduced to something completely within your grasp. The world cannot delude you when you see its inner or real nature. If you can establish your mind in this state and not lose your inward sight, no matter where you are or what posture you assume, your attainment will be stable. But without such skill your newly won intuition may easily fade away; therefore, you must guard it with all your effort. As the Scriptures say, just as a chief queen takes care of the



child in her womb who will one day be a "wheel-turning monarch" (a world emperor, ruling by righteousness) <sup>8</sup> lest she should have a miscarriage, so too one should guard diligently one's newly developed insight until it is stable. For its sake you should willingly give up worldly acquisitions in much the same way as we are ready to sacrifice everything upon contracting a fatal disease. To this end it is better to live in an environment suitable for meditation and avoid disagreeable persons and places, just as a sick person avoids taking things that disagree with him.

The fruits of meditation should not be misunderstood, however. The practice of controlling the mind in this manner does not make you abnormal or unable to function in society. One does not sit meditating all the time, for after you have gained mastery through meditation its taste never leaves you. The defilements of passion, delusion, anger, hatred, and jealousy lose their control over you, so that whatever may be your occupation or profession it can be done with greater self-sufficiency. You may go any place or associate with anyone and you will be able mindfully to maintain the state of equilibrium or what has now become a normality for you. The mind well trained through the practice of meditation is useful both from the practical as well as from the spiritual point of view.

We have seen that mind control results in happiness and immediate profit and makes one able to attain still higher values. To see things in their real nature or to attain Buddha-Dhamma calls for one-pointedness of mind. The stronger the concentration, the easier and more rapidly one can attain Buddha-Dhamma. Failing

to attain Dhamma now, however, one will reach it by making it one's way of life.

One aspect of this discussion needs further elaboration, namely, the practice of a *paññā-vimutta*, one who is emancipated through insight. After learning meditation and gaining a workable mastery over the mind, one should tread the path of developing insight. That is to say, one has to maintain the freedom of mind by not harboring attachment or clinging to any sectarian view or philosophy which previously one used to dispute with others. To attain Buddha-Dhamma demands utter openness and purity of heart. Nonattachment to sectarian views implies nonattachment to individuals as well. Even if the person for whom you have attachment is an *arahant*, or perfected one, it is false, since you cannot recognize an *arahant* until you yourself become perfected. Such attachment or grasping might be useful from an ethical point of view, but it is misleading as far as the emancipation of mind is concerned. Rather than seeking to emulate one whom you take to be perfected, you would do far better to develop insight into the real nature of *arahant*-ship. One should respect the saint as a sign or a symbol in much the same way that people respect the national flag as the symbol of the nation. You should respect anything worthy of respect without having the least attachment, for attachment always imprisons the mind and heart.

In a similar way we respect the Buddha for his discovery of Dhamma. We are overjoyed when we realize that the teaching of the Enlightened One is so meaningful, rational, and glorious in the beginning, middle, and end, and that if we practice it, we will undoubtedly be freed

from suffering. But we do not harbor any attachment to the person of the Buddha except that of respecting him as a torchbearer who has made clear a pathway to Truth. In this way we do not make a god out of the Buddha who bestows his benefits according to the propitiations of the people. We should not even think that the Buddha can help us or can lead the way, because he says that we must search for the Truth by ourselves. The Buddha has lighted the fire of understanding so that from it we may light a similar fire for our own sake. When we know that the Buddha is the embodiment of the light that lightens our way, then we ourselves, embodying that light, become the Buddha—enlightened ones.

There is another important way of attaining Buddha-Dhamma that should be taken into consideration. That is to serve others. It means to render help to others by teaching or showing the way to the Truth of Buddhism. When you have trained your mind to the extent that you can keep a check on your emotions, you are able to guide or teach others in proportion to the experience that you derived therefrom. The Buddha disapproved of teaching what one cannot put into practice by oneself, but he encouraged the teaching of that which one can really practice. The Buddha himself served humanity in this respect. Teaching others is beneficial, since one teaches oneself as well in the cultivation of benevolence or friendly feeling. The Buddha exhorted us to help others, out of our compassion, toward their emancipation by guiding them to the extent that we have been emancipated. The friendly feeling we cultivate through guiding others is beneficial for the concentration and cultivation of the mind. We are forced to consider matters carefully

and deeply. In this way, by helping others, we help to train ourselves.

In conclusion, we repeat that the way to attain Buddha-Dhamma is to harbor no feeling of attachment to anything, no matter whether it is sense objects, sectarian views, or one's own supposed self. All troubles arise from attachment which has ignorance as its mother. The feeling of attachment is an instinct common to all creatures who can think, and the more one thinks about things the stronger the attachment may become. The power of thinking enables one increasingly to enjoy different kinds of sensory tastes. The more one clings to taste the stronger the bond of attachment becomes. Animals, compared with human beings, are less sentimental with regard to the sensory objects of form, sound, odor, taste, and tangible things, for the reason that animals are endowed with a comparatively weaker faculty of thinking. Their enjoyment of the taste of sense objects is, as their nature has endowed them, limited in quality, quantity, and time, because unlike men, they are unable to refine their tastes. I do not mean that we should behave like animals. Rather, man should use his faculty of thinking for higher values to be free from self-deception. Let the production of your mind be your servant rather than your master. Let it be helpful rather than destructive to your well-being. Man must be better than the animal by using his power of thinking in a proper and constructive way. His knowledge should not bring about his own ruin. He should possess decisive knowledge with regard to good and bad, right and wrong.

The sense of beauty, melody, and so on is the product

of man's attachment which is gradually and unconsciously developed. For example, old people in the countryside who are uneducated in fine arts such as music or in fashions of dress have no fascination for such things as do many city folk. They will feel, rather, that fashionable dress is an offensive sight and that city music is dull or noisy. On the other hand they may have a liking for old-style dress and the chanting of monks. Why is it so? It is because of different levels of attachment. All sense objects are colored or pictured by the light of man's illusive attachment. All melodious music is nothing but the harmonized combinations of sounds ranging through different frequencies. Sounds are regarded as melodious when they are harmoniously and ingeniously combined with the composition, seeming all the more melodious in proportion to the nature of one's presuppositions. The gay or sad feelings that are aroused in the human mind by the combination of sounds are, in fact, only the offspring or result of attachment.

As befits a matter of self-delusion, man is juggled by the jugglery of his own way of thinking, since out of his own ignorance he has created and developed systems of taste which he then calls education, art, and so on. Yet, wanting real intelligence, he is caught by his own creation, for he fails to remain unattached. Man paints a picture of a lion and is frightened by it, paints lovely things and is inspired by them, paints ugly things and hates them! Though he himself paints, he fails to understand that there is nothing frightful, inspiring, or hateful in the picture he has painted, but that these responses result from the covering of ignorance. To do away with attachment is to gain the wisdom that drives away ignorance. When a man has no attachment or attraction,

forms and sounds do not delude him, since they are laid bare by his insight, thereby showing their real nature. Then man can handle them properly; that is, they no longer exercise an influence on him in terms of passion, anxiety, and the like. On the contrary, they become helpful and instructive and promote quietude and a healthy state of mind and body.

The salient feature of the way to Buddha-Dhamma constitutes the removal of the coverings of the mind. The moment that the feeling of attachment is dismissed from the mind, the Truth of Buddhism is realized. We then discover or rediscover what the Buddha discovered and taught. Every one of us should strive to attain it because it marks the standard of perfection in manhood. It is the culmination of the holy life. By striving to attain it we raise ourselves above worldly phenomena and can control them thereby. No problems of life can touch us. There is no state of being, whether monk or nun, male or female, young or old, that can be a hindrance to us, and there is no form, sound, odor, taste, or tangible thing in this world or in any other world that can disturb our majestic quietude. Indeed, the only thing left is an immovable and unmoved state where there is no birth, old age, suffering, or death. It is a state of everlasting, radiant smiles with nobody smiling. This state is the very perfection of the values of life which everyone who earnestly follows the Buddha, the Enlightened One, the Perfect One, hopes for and aims to achieve.



# III

## EVERYDAY LANGUAGE AND DHAMMA LANGUAGE

TIME AND TIME AGAIN I have noticed that regardless of how the subject is explained, there are a great many aspects of profound teaching that most people do not understand. People hear things explained many times over and still do not understand. Why is this? If we look into it, we discover the reason. Most of us are familiar only with everyday language. We fail to realize the existence of another quite different and very special language, the language of religion, the language of Dhamma.

The language of Dhamma is something altogether different from the language of everyday. This point must be borne well in mind. Everyday language and Dhamma language are two distinct and different modes of speaking. Everyday language is worldly language, the language of people who do not know Dhamma. Dhamma language is the language spoken by people who have gained a deep insight into the Truth, Dhamma. Having perceived Dhamma, they speak in terms appropriate to their experience, and so Dhamma language comes to be. This special mode of speaking is what we call Dhamma language. It is a language quite distinct from ordinary, everyday language.

Everyday language is based on sensory things and experiences accessible to the ordinary man. Being based on the physical rather than the spiritual, it serves only for discussion of worldly matters and situations. It serves only for tangible things perceived under ordinary, everyday circumstances. By contrast, Dhamma language has to do with the consciousness, with the intangible, non-physical world. In order to be able to speak and understand this Dhamma language it is necessary to have gained insight into the consciousness. Consequently only people who have seen Dhamma, the Truth, speak the Dhamma language, the language of the spiritual world lying beyond the physical.

Let us put this another way. We distinguish ordinary *physical* language from *meta-physical* language. The field of metaphysics is different from that of physics, and consequently there is a special metaphysical language. In addition, therefore, to the ordinary language of the physical there is a language that transcends the physical. Physical language is worldly, conventional language used under ordinary circumstances and based on observable things. Metaphysical language is based on concepts. It has to be learned, studied, and understood. It is based not on the physical world but on the mental.

The point now is that if we know only everyday language, we are in no position to understand true Dhamma, or Truth, when we hear it. If we do not know the language of Dhamma, then we cannot understand Dhamma, the supramundane Truth that could really liberate us from this unsatisfactory worldly condition (dukkha). The reason we do not understand Dhamma is that we know only everyday language and are not familiar with Dhamma language.

It is essential always to interpret a religious teaching in terms of Dhamma language as well as in terms of everyday language. *Both* meanings must be considered. Please take note of the following passages:

“A wise man is one familiar with both modes of speaking.”

“He who is familiar with the various modes of speaking is a wise man.”

This is a general principle to be applied when studying Dhamma, whether at high or low level. It is also applicable in verbal discussion. The passages cited contain the unambiguous expression “both meanings” or “both modes of speaking.” A discerning person must consider *both* meanings or modes of speaking and not just either one of them alone. Anyone who, for instance, considers only the ordinary, everyday meaning and ignores the other meaning, the meaning in terms of Dhamma language, cannot be called a wise or discerning person. As the Buddha said, a discerning person is one who is able to take into consideration *both* modes of speaking. It behooves us, then, to be careful and to study diligently in order to acquire this ability to take account of both possible interpretations, the one in terms of everyday language and the other in terms of Dhamma language. We shall now consider some examples of this distinction.

The first example is the word “Buddha.” As you know, the Buddha in everyday language refers to the historical Enlightened Being, Gotama Buddha. It refers to a physical man of flesh and bone who was born in India over two thousand years ago, died, and was cremated. This is the meaning of the Buddha in everyday language. Considered in terms of Dhamma language, however, the word “Buddha” refers to the Truth that the historical

Buddha realized and taught, the Dhamma itself. The Buddha said: "He who sees the Dhamma sees the Enlightened One. He who sees the Enlightened One sees the Dhamma. One who sees not the Dhamma, though he grasp at the robe of the Enlightened One, cannot be said to have *seen* the Enlightened One." Now, the Dhamma is something intangible. It is not something physical, certainly not flesh and bones. Yet the Buddha said it is one and the same as the Enlightened One. "He who sees the Dhamma sees the Enlightened One." Anyone who fails to see the Dhamma cannot be said to have seen the Enlightened One. Thus, in Dhamma language the Buddha is one and the same as that Truth by virtue of which he became the Buddha, and anyone who sees that Truth can be said to have seen the true Buddha. To see just his physical body would not be to see the Buddha at all and would bring no real benefit.

During the Buddha's lifetime the majority of people were unfavorably disposed toward him. They abused him and even harmed him. They did not *understand* him because what they saw was only his physical body, the outer shell, the Buddha of everyday language. The real Buddha, the Buddha of Dhamma language, is the Truth he perceived, knowing which he became Buddha. When he said, "Who sees the Truth sees me. Who sees me sees the Truth," he was speaking Dhamma language.

Again, the Buddha said, "The Dhamma and the Vinaya (Discipline), which I have proclaimed . . . these shall be your teacher when I have passed away." So the *real* Buddha has not passed away, has not ceased to exist. What ceased to exist was just the physical body, the outer shell. The real Teacher, that is, the Dhamma-Vinaya, is still with us. This is the meaning of the word "Buddha" in

Dhamma language. The Buddha of everyday language is the physical man; the Buddha of Dhamma language is the Dhamma itself which made him Buddha.

Now we consider the word "Dhamma," or "Dharma" in Sanskrit. At the lowest level of everyday language this word is understood as referring to the actual books containing the Scriptures, the Dhamma in the bookcase. Or it may be understood as referring to the spoken word used in expounding the Teaching. This is the meaning of Dhamma in everyday language, the language of a deluded person who has not yet *seen* the Dhamma.

In terms of Dhamma language the Dhamma is one and the same as the Enlightened One. "He who sees the Dhamma sees the Enlightened One. He who sees the Enlightened One sees the Dhamma." This is the real Dhamma. In the original Pāli language the word "Dhamma" was used to refer to all the intricate and involved things that go to make up what we call *Nature*. In the main, Dhamma embraces

1. Nature itself
2. The laws of Nature
3. Man's duty to act in accordance with the laws of Nature
4. The benefits to be derived from acting in accordance with the laws of Nature

This is the wide range of meaning covered by the Dhamma. It does not refer simply to books, or palm-leaf manuscripts, or the voice of the preacher. The word as used in Dhamma language refers to something non-physical. This Dhamma is all-embracing; it is profound; it includes all things, some difficult to understand, others not so difficult.

Now we turn to the word "Sangha." In everyday lan-

guage the word "Sangha" refers to the community of monks wearing the yellow robe and wandering from place to place. This is the Sangha as it is understood in everyday language, the language of the unenlightened man who has not yet seen the Truth. In Dhamma language the Sangha refers once again to the Truth, the Dhamma itself. It refers to those excellent qualities of whatever kind and degree that exist in the mind of the monk, the man of virtue. There are certain mental qualities that make a man a monk. The totality of these extraordinary qualities existing in the inner being of the monk is what is called the Sangha.

The Sangha of everyday language is the assembly of monks themselves. The Sangha of Dhamma language is those transcendent qualities the monks represent. The Sangha proper consists of these four stages: the "stream enterer" (*sotāpanna*), the "once returner" (*sakadāgāmin*), the "nonreturner" (*anāgāmin*), and the fully perfected man or *arahant*.<sup>9</sup> These terms also refer to inner rather than outer qualities, because as to physical frame these men are no different from anyone else. Where they do differ is in spiritual or inner qualities. This is what makes a man a stream enterer, once returner, nonreturner, or *arahant*. This is how the Sangha is to be understood in Dhamma language.

Let us consider the word "religion" (*sāsana*). In everyday language, the language of the undiscerning man, the word "religion" refers simply to temples, monastery buildings, pagodas, saffron robes, and so on. If there are pagodas and temples visible everywhere, people say, "Ah! The religion is thriving!" This is what religion means in everyday language.

In Dhamma language religion refers to the genuine



Dhamma which can really serve man as a basis of support. The Dhamma which provides fundamental sustenance for man and which brings about the end of his unsatisfactory condition (*dukkha*), that Dhamma is true religion. This is the meaning of religion as the term is used in Dhamma language. To say that the religion is thriving is, then, to say that it is infused with the power to put an end to man's unsatisfactory condition or state of being. To say that the religion is thriving does not by any means imply progress in terms of more men in yellow robes. Whereas religion in everyday language means visible, material progress, religion in Dhamma language is the Truth that can serve man as his ground of being.

Those who take the word "religion" as meaning the teaching of Buddhism are nearer the mark than those who take it as standing for its institutional aspects. To consider progress in religious study and understanding as true religious progress is correct up to a point. But it is not good enough. To understand religion as simply its teaching is still to understand it only in terms of everyday language.

In terms of Dhamma language, religion is the life of renunciation (*brahmacarya*), that is to say, actually living one's life in accordance with Dhamma which is "glorious in its beginning, middle, and end." By a life of renunciation the Buddha meant the way or practice that can really put an end to the unsatisfactory conditions of life. The glory of its beginning is study and learning, the glory of its middle is practice, and the glory of its end is the reward that comes from the practice. This is the genuine life of renunciation, the religion of Dhamma language.

Continuing our study, we shall examine a word that relates to our day-to-day life, the word "work." In every-

day language work refers primarily to earning a living. It is something we cannot avoid. We have to work in order to eat, to fill the belly, and also to get the things we desire. This unavoidable chore of earning a living is what is meant by the term "work" taken as everyday language. Taken as Dhamma language, work refers to mind-training (*kammaṭṭhāna*), that is, the practice of Dhamma. In its most profound sense, work is the acting out of Truth.

The average person, the man who has no understanding of Dhamma, works out of necessity in order to provide himself with food and the things he desires. But for the genuine aspirant, the man who has caught a glimpse of Truth, work consists in putting the Dhamma into practice. This kind of work has to be done sincerely, earnestly, and diligently, with perseverance and discernment. Only the person of highest integrity can complete it successfully.

Work in an ordinary sense can be considered at a higher level. Though our work may be of a worldly nature, if we do it in the right way, ultimately that work will instruct us beyond the activity itself. It will bring us to an understanding of the true nature of the inner life; it will enable us to recognize impermanence, suffering, and nonselfhood (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*); it will bring us to the Truth, without our making any conscious effort in that direction. So, in Dhamma language, work refers to the practice that leads to the Truth to be found right within one's self. Even the job of keeping the body in a fit and clean condition, even this is a kind of Dhamma practice insofar as it is done with a discerning mind, a mind that is diligent and industrious.

Summing up, work in everyday language means earning

a living out of necessity; work in Dhamma language means putting the Teaching into practice. Perhaps another word about the life of renunciation is appropriate here. In everyday language, the language of the average person who knows nothing of Dhamma, the word "renunciation" (*brahmacarya*) means no more than abstaining from adultery. But in Dhamma language the life of renunciation refers to any kind of purposeful giving up of a mental defilement (*kilesa*), any form of abstinence rigorously adhered to. Regardless of what kind of practice we undertake, if we stick to it earnestly and strictly and without backsliding, then we are living the life of renunciation. Renunciation does not mean simply abstaining from adultery. This is how everyday language and Dhamma language differ in this case.

Now we make a big jump to the word "Nirvāṇa" or "Nibbāna." In the everyday language of the ordinary man, Nirvāṇa is a place, an abode. This is because preachers often speak of "Nirvāṇa, the city of immortality," or "this wonder city of Nirvāṇa." People hearing these expressions misunderstand them. They take Nirvāṇa to be an actual city or place. What is more, they even believe that it is a place abounding in all sorts of good things, a place where one's every wish is fulfilled and everything one wants is immediately available. They want to get to Nirvāṇa because it is the place where all wishes are granted. This is Nirvāṇa in the everyday language of deluded people who know nothing of Dhamma. Yet this kind of talk can be heard everywhere, not excluding temples.

In Dhamma language the word "Nirvāṇa" refers to the complete and absolute extinction of every kind of defilement and unsatisfactory condition. Any time there

is freedom from defilements (*kilesa*) and the unsatisfactory conditions that produce suffering (*dukkha*), there is Nirvāṇa. If defilements have been eradicated completely, the Nirvāṇa state is permanent. The total extinguishing and growing cool of the fire of defilements and the condition of suffering is Nirvāṇa in Dhamma language. In everyday language Nirvāṇa is a mirage city; in Dhamma language Nirvāṇa is the complete and utter extinction of unsatisfactoriness, a state that can be realized right here and now.

Pressing on, now, we come to the expression “path and fruit” (*magga-phala*). The expression is so popular it has become hackneyed. Ordinary people doing nearly anything refer to it as path and fruit. As soon as something works out according to plan they say, “It’s path and fruit!” Even the most worldly of worldlings in the most worldly of situations will say, “It’s path and fruit!” meaning that things have turned out successfully. Such is the way the term is used in everyday language.

But in Dhamma language, path and fruit refers to the ability to make an end of suffering (*dukkha*) and to destroy the defilements giving rise to that condition. To do this in the right manner, in accordance with the true nature of things, step by step—this is the meaning of path and fruit in Dhamma language. People are much given to using the expression in everyday speech. This ordinary usage of the term must be carefully distinguished from its Dhamma meaning.

We turn now to a rather strange term, the word “Mara,” the tempter, the devil. Mara in everyday language is visualized as a monster with body, face, and eyes of repulsive and terrifying appearance. Mara in Dhamma language, however, is not a living creature but

rather a kind of mental state opposed to the good and wholesome and to progress toward the cessation of the unsatisfactory condition of *dukkha*. That which opposes and obstructs progress is called Mara. We may think of Mara as a living being if we wish, as long as we understand what he really represents.

No doubt you have often heard the story of how Mara came down from the Paranimmita-vasavatti realm<sup>10</sup> to confront the Buddha-to-be. This was the real Mara the Tempter. He came down from the highest heaven, the Paranimmita-vasavatti realm, which is a heaven of sensual enjoyments of the highest order, a heaven abounding in everything the heart could desire. There someone is always standing by to satisfy to the full one's every wish. This is Mara personifying the temptations of the sensory world, but not the one with the ugly, ferocious countenance and reddened mouth who is supposed to go around catching creatures and sucking their blood. That is the Mara as ignorant people picture him, the Mara of the everyday-language people who do not recognize the real Mara when they see him.

In Dhamma language the word "Mara" might mean the heaven known as Paranimmita-vasavatti, the highest realm of sensuality, or any mental state opposed to the good and the wholesome and to spiritual progress. This is Mara in Dhamma language.

How shall we understand the word "world"? In everyday language world refers to the earth, this physical world, flat, round, or however it might be conceived. The world as the physical earth is everyday language. In Dhamma language, however, world refers to the worldly (*lokiya*) mental state, the worldly stage in the scale of mental development, that is to say, the state of *dukkha*. The

condition that is impermanent, changing, unsatisfactory—this is the worldly condition of the mind. And this is what is meant by the world in Dhamma language. Hence it is said that the world is characterized primarily by conditionality and sorrow. When the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths he sometimes used the term “world” and sometimes the term “unsatisfactory condition” or “suffering” (*dukkha*). They are one and the same. For instance, he spoke of

1. The world
2. The cause of the arising of the world
3. The extinction of the world
4. The method that brings about the extinction of the world

What he meant was

1. The unsatisfactory condition (*dukkha*)
2. The cause of the unsatisfactory condition
3. The extinction of the unsatisfactory condition
4. The method that brings about the extinction of the unsatisfactory condition.

So, in the language of the Buddha, the language of Dhamma, the word “world” refers to *dukkha*. *Dukkha* and the world are one and the same.

Perhaps in a more commonplace way we might say that world refers to something shallow and lacking depth, something that falls short of the highest. For instance, we speak of something as “worldly,” meaning that it is not Dhamma. This is another perspective on the word in Dhamma language.

Terms not unrelated to world are “birth” (*jāti*) and “death.” In everyday language the word “birth” refers to the physical entrance into the world from the mother’s womb. A man is born physically only once. Having been



born, he lives in the world until he dies and enters the grave. Physical birth occurs to each of us only once. This birth from the mother's womb is what we mean by birth in everyday language.



In Dhamma language the word refers to the birth of the idea of "I" and "me" anytime it arises in the mind. In this sense the ordinary person is born very often, time and time again. A more developed person is born less frequently; a person well advanced in practice is born less frequently still, and ultimately ceases being reborn altogether. Each arising in the mind of the idea of "I" in one form or another is called a birth. From this point of view birth takes place many times over in a single day. As soon as anyone thinks like an animal, he is born as an animal that same moment. To think as a human being is to be born a human being. To think like a celestial being is to be born a celestial being. Life, individuality, pleasure, and pain—all these were identified by the Buddha as simply momentary states of consciousness. Thus birth means, in Dhamma language, the arising of the idea of "I" and "me," and not, as in everyday language, physical birth from the mother's womb.

The word "birth" is very common in the Buddha's discourses. When he was speaking of everyday things he used the word with its everyday meaning. And if he was expounding Higher Dhamma, for instance when discussing conditioned arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), he used birth (*jāti*) with the meaning it has in Dhamma language. In his description of conditioned arising he was not talking about physical birth. He was talking about the birth of the obsessive idea of "me" and "mine," "myself" and "my own."

The opposite of birth is death. Death in everyday

language means the cessation of life and the cremation or burial of the body. But in Dhamma language the word refers to the cessation of the idea of "I" and "me." The term "life" itself in everyday language, the language of immature people, applies to anything that is not yet dead, that can still exist and move about and walk and eat. In the more precise language of biology it means the normal functioning of the protoplasm, of the cell and nucleus. Their normal functioning and development is referred to as life.

In Dhamma language life refers to the truly deathless state, the unconditioned, Nibbāna, the life everlasting. This is Life. If we are speaking everyday language, life has the ordinary, familiar meaning, but in Dhamma language life refers to the deathless state. When there is no birth there is also death. This state is the unconditioned. It is what we call Nibbāna, and what in other religions is often spoken of as the life everlasting. It is life that never again comes to an end. It is life in God, or whatever one cares to call it. This is the real life, life as understood in Dhamma language.

Now we come closer to home, to the word "man." We use the word "man" all the time. Everyone is a man in the generic sense of a human being. In everyday language the referent of the term is a creature with a body of so-called human form. But in Dhamma language man refers to special qualities implied in the word "human," certain qualities of inner being. If someone criticizes a friend saying, "You're not a man!" what does he mean? The person criticized has a human body just as does the person criticizing. Why then is he accused of not being a man? The point is that he lacks the special qualities implied in the word "human." Lacking these, he is ac-

cused of not being a man. In everyday language man refers to a creature of human form; in Dhamma language it refers to the essential qualities implied in human.

Similar considerations apply to the word "God." In everyday language God refers to a supreme celestial being with various creative powers. This is the God of everyday language. The God of Dhamma language is rather different. It is a profound and hidden power which is neither a human being nor a celestial being nor any other kind of being. It is Nature and is intangible. For instance, what we call the laws of Nature are responsible for creation and for the coming into existence of all things. Natural law governs creation and has power over it. In Dhamma language God means, among other things, the laws of Nature, what Buddhists call Dhamma. In the Pāli language the laws of Nature were referred to simply as Dhamma. This single word implies all the laws of Nature. In this sense Dhamma functions as the Buddhist God.

Looking at the human condition, let us examine the "four woeful states" (*apāya*). The woeful states are the netherworlds. Normally four of them are recognized: hell (*niraya*), the realm of the beasts, the realm of the hungry ghosts (*peta*), and the realm of the frightened ghosts or demons (*asura*). These four taken together are called the four woeful states. They are vividly depicted in temple murals. Hell, the beasts, the hungry ghosts, and the *asura*-s are all painted as they are traditionally imagined to be as four states attained after death. In other words, the four woeful states as understood in everyday language are interpreted literally or materialistically. The denizens of hell, the beasts, and so on are thought of in this way as actual, lowly creatures.

In everyday language, hell is a region under the earth. It is ruled over by the god of death, who carries off people and subjects them to all sorts of punishments. It is a place where one may go after death. Contrast this with hell as understood in Dhamma language. Here, hell is *anxiety*, anxiety that burns us just like a fire. Whenever anxiety burns within us we are in hell, the hell of Dhamma language. Anyone who is consumed with anxiety, just as he might be consumed by fire, is said to fall into hell in that same moment. And just as anxiety is of various kinds, so we recognize various kinds of corresponding hells.

In a similar manner, in everyday language birth in the beastly realm means an actual, physical birth as a pig, dog, or some other animal. Rebirth after death as some kind of lower animal is the ordinary meaning of rebirth into the realm of the beasts. In Dhamma language it has a different meaning, however. At any moment that one acts with animal stupidity, or bestiality, one is born into the realm of beasts. It happens here and now. One may be born as a beast many times over in a single day. In Dhamma language, therefore, birth as a beast means stupidity or bestiality.

The term "hungry ghost" (*peta*) in everyday language refers to a creature supposed to have a tiny mouth and an enormous belly. He can never manage to eat enough and so is chronically hungry. This is another possible form in which we may be reborn after death. These are the hungry ghosts of everyday language. The hungry ghosts of Dhamma language are purely mental states. Ambition based on craving, worry based on craving—to be afflicted with these is to be born a hungry ghost. These symptoms are just like those that result from having a

mouth the size of a needle's eye and a belly the size of a mountain. Anyone suffering from too intense a craving, a pathological thirst, anyone who worries and frets excessively, has the same symptoms as a hungry ghost. He can be said to have been reborn a hungry ghost here and now. It is not something that happens only after death.

Now, the *asura*-s are frightened ghosts. In ordinary language an *asura* is a kind of invisible being. It goes around haunting and spooking but is too afraid to show itself. In Dhamma language the word refers to fear in the consciousness of a human being. To be reborn as a frightened ghost one does not need to die a physical death. Whenever one is afraid, one is simultaneously reborn an *asura*. To be afraid without good reason, to be excessively apprehensive, to be bound by imaginary superstitions—this is what it is to be reborn as a frightened ghost. Some people are even afraid of doing good. They fear that if they were to attain Nibbāna, life would lose all its flavor and would be unbearably dull. To be afflicted with unjustified fear of this kind is to be reborn as an *asura*—here and now.

These are the four woeful states as understood in Dhamma language. They are rather different from the woeful states of everyday language. If we are not subject to the woeful states of Dhamma language, then we are certain not to fall into the woeful states of ordinary language. For instance, if we have overcome states of depression and anxiety, then we avoid falling into psychological hells created in this life. With such an attainment we need have no fear of falling into hell in some lifetime after death. Again, if we avoid the stupidity and insensitivity of the beasts, the sensual hunger of the hungry ghosts, and the fear of the *asura*-s, then we are free from

the kinds of attitudes that might cause us to be reborn after death as beasts, hungry ghosts, or *asura*-s. It behooves us to interest ourselves only in the hungry ghosts and other woeful beings that we stand in danger of becoming here and now. What we may become after death can be put aside. There is no need to concern ourselves with it. If we avoid in this life the hungry ghosts of Dhamma language, we are certain not to become the hungry ghosts of everyday language. If we live and practice the Dhamma properly, we avoid falling into the woeful states here and now, and we are certain not to fall into the woeful states supposed to follow death. The four woeful states are a part of life. The heaven and hell of everyday language are realms *outside*, attained after death. But the heaven and hell of Dhamma language are to be found in the mind and may be attained anytime at all. This is how the woeful states of Dhamma language differ from those of everyday language.

Heaven to most people means some wonderful, highly attractive celestial realm up above. Spend such and such an amount in merit-making and you are entitled to one mansion in heaven! In Dhamma language, heaven at one level refers to infatuating sensual bliss of the highest order. This is the lower heaven, the heaven of sensuality. Beyond it is the heaven called the Brahmaloaka. This is the *absence* of any object of sensuality. It is a state of mental well-being resulting from the absence of any disturbing object of sensuality. It is as if someone with a hunger for sense objects had indulged and satiated himself to the point of revulsion from sense objects. He would then want only to remain quite empty, still, untouched. This is the state of freedom from sensuality, the condition of the Brahma-s. At one stage heaven is filled



with sensuality, as epitomized by the Paranimmita-vasavatti heaven. The heavens of the Brahmaloṇa, however, are devoid of disturbance from sensuality, even though the self, the "I," is still there.

Part of the complex of terms associated with heaven and afterlife is the word "ambrosia." Ambrosia is the elixir of immortality. In everyday language ambrosia is a kind of liquor that the celestial beings imbibe to make themselves invulnerable before going out once again to slaughter and cause general havoc. The ambrosia of Dhamma language is Dhamma at its highest, the truth of nonselfhood (*anattā*) or emptiness (*suññatā*). This highest Dhamma, the truth of nonselfhood or emptiness, makes a man immortal because it makes him free of the self idea. When there is no self, how can there be death? So, in Dhamma language the elixir of life is the truth of nonselfhood or emptiness. As for the liquor which is traditionally supposed to confer eternal life on whoever drinks it, that is the ambrosia of everyday language, the language of uninformed people, the language of people who have not perceived or penetrated to the Truth.

A moment ago we mentioned the word "emptiness," or *suññatā*. Let us now have a closer look at it. *Suñña* means empty; *-tā* is the equivalent of "-ness." *Suññatā* is emptiness. In the language of people who have not seen the Truth, emptiness means simply absence of any content whatsoever, a void or vacuum. Emptiness or *suññatā* in Dhamma language, however, is quite different. Here everything of every kind and variety may be present in any quantity—everything, that is, with the single exception of the idea of "me" and "mine." All physical and mental entities may be present with just this one exception: there can be no idea of "me" and "mine." No

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"me," no "mine"—that is emptiness as it is understood in Dhamma language, the language of the Buddha.

The world is empty. Empty of what? Empty of self and belonging to self. Everything is allowed to exist as long as it is not regarded as "me" or "mine." This was the level of meaning when the Buddha spoke of emptiness. When the Buddha spoke of emptiness he was speaking Dhamma language. Foolish people understand emptiness to mean that there is nothing in the world at all, just a vacuum! If the word "emptiness" is misinterpreted in these terms of everyday language, the Buddha's teaching of emptiness becomes meaningless. Uninformed people who hold forth on the subject of emptiness make strange assertions having nothing whatever to do with emptiness as taught by the Buddha.

The word "empty" applied to physical things naturally means absence of any content, but in the metaphysical or Dhammic context it means that though every sort of thing may be present, there is utter absence of "I-ness" and "my-ness." In the physical world, the mental world, or anywhere at all *there is no such thing as "me" or "mine."* The conditions of "I-ness" and "my-ness" just are not present. Hence the world is described as empty. It is not that the world is devoid of all content. Everything is there, and it can be made use of with discernment. Go ahead and make use of the things of the world! But remember—do so without the idea of "me" and "mine!"

How does one come to realize the Dhammic meaning of emptiness? He does so by "stopping." Stopping in the sense of not moving, not stirring, is everyday language, the language of the ordinary person. In Dhamma language, the language of the Buddha, stopping has a different meaning. For example, in the dialogue with An-

*gulināla*,<sup>11</sup> the Buddha used stopping to mean becoming empty of self. If there is no self, what is there to go running about? Think about this point. If there is no self, where is the "I" that runs about? Obviously the "I" has *stopped*. Stopping in the language of the Buddha is absence of any self to be grasped at and clung to, absolute emptiness of selfhood.

To stop is the same as being empty. A person may be doing a variety of things and yet be said to have stopped. He has realized that there is no self left to run about. Every form of wanting and craving has stopped. There is no "I" to want anything anywhere, no "I" to go running about. A man who still has desires goes running about looking for every kind of thing, even for merit and goodness. Running about, looking for this and that, here, there, and everywhere—this is *running*. But if he manages to *stop* desiring completely, to *stop* being a self, then even though he appears to be running, he can still be said to have *stopped*. The paradoxical nature of stopping can be avoided no more easily than the paradox of emptiness. Only from a Dhammic perspective is the paradox resolved.

Even ordinary words in religious discourse are easily misunderstood. For example, consider light and darkness. Normally, when people speak of light they are referring to lamplight, sunlight, or some other kind of physical illumination. In the Dhamma language of the Buddha, however, the word "light" refers to insight, wisdom, higher knowledge (*paññā*). Even when the Buddha entered a dark cave there was still light in the sense that in his mind there was the light of insight and higher knowledge. On a moonless, starless night, when all lamps have been put out, it is still possible to say there is light

—if there is insight and wisdom in the mind of the yogi. This is the light in Dhamma language.

Similarly, in ordinary, everyday language darkness is absence of light which makes it impossible to see. In Dhamma language darkness means lack of insight, ignorance of the Truth, spiritual blindness (*avijjā*). Here is true darkness. If a person lacking true insight were to sit in full sunlight, he would still be in darkness, the darkness of ignorance as to the true nature of things. The difference between the meaning of light and darkness in Dhamma language and in everyday language should be obvious to all of us.

Of all the words in Buddhism one of the most important is “karma” or *kamma*. When the average person says, “That’s karma!” he means, “Too bad!” Bad luck as punishment for sins committed is the meaning given to the word “karma” by the ordinary person. But in Dhamma language karma refers to something different. It refers to action. Bad action is called black karma; good action is called white karma; and there is another remarkable kind of karma that is neither black nor white, a karma that serves to neutralize the other two kinds. It consists in coming to perceive nonselfhood (*anattā*), emptiness (*suññatā*), so that the self is done away with. This kind of action is what we may call Buddhist karma, the real karma, the kind of karma the Buddha taught—indeed, the transcending of all karma.

Most people are only interested in black karma and white karma, bad karma and good karma. They take no interest in this third kind of karma which is neither black nor white, neither bad nor good, which consists in complete freedom from selfhood and leads to the attainment of Nibbāna. It wipes out every kind of bad and good

karma. People do not understand the method for wiping out karma completely. They do not know that the way to put an end to all karma is through the kind of karma that consists in applying the Buddha's method called the Noble Eightfold Path. The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is karma that is neither black nor white. Karma on the level of Dhamma is thereby the transcendence of all karmic effects. It is very different from the karma of immature people, who exclaim, "That's karma!" meaning "Too bad!" or "Bad luck!" Karma understood as bad luck is the karma of everyday language.

Often it is said that the effect of karma is overcome by taking refuge (*saraṇa*) or finding support in the Buddha or the Sangha. In everyday language a refuge or support is some person or thing outside of and other than oneself on which one may depend for help. For instance, a person may depend on his boss, spirits, good-luck omens, or guardian angels. Anything or anyone at all other than oneself taken as a point of support—this is the meaning of refuge or support in everyday language.

The refuge or support of Dhamma language is one's own self rather than someone else. Even when we speak of going to Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha for refuge, what we ought to have in mind is the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha that are to be found within ourselves, within our own consciousness. Only then can they really serve as a point of support. It is our own efforts that bring into existence Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The refuge or support of Dhamma language is one's own self. It is within oneself, not somewhere outside.

We have discussed a number of terms important in the vocabulary of Buddhism, but how would the expression "the essence of Buddhism" be treated? In discussions

as to what constitutes the essence of Buddhism all sorts of ideas are brought forward. Some people recite this or that well-known formula, such as "Discipline, Discourses, Higher Truth." Time and time again they will bring out the same old stereotyped expressions and offer them as the essence of Buddhism. This sort of essence is everyday language, the language of uninformed people. People with no knowledge of Dhamma will rattle off a few Pāli phrases or some other clichés and proclaim them to be the essence of Buddhism.

The essence of Buddhism, as this expression is understood in Dhamma language, as the Buddha would have understood it, is the realization that *nothing whatsoever should be grasped at or clung to*. Nothing whatever should be grasped at or clung to as "me" or "mine." This is the essence of Buddhism as understood in Dhamma language, the language of the Buddha. Anyone after the essence of Buddhism should be very careful not to get just the essence of its everyday-language meaning, the language of people ignorant of Dhamma. That sort of essence is likely to be something ridiculous or childish.

What has been said so far is sufficient to point out how a single word may have two different meanings. An intelligent and discerning person will be capable of considering both modes of speaking. "A wise man is one who is careful to consider *both* modes of speaking." "Both modes of speaking" implies the two possible meanings of a word. One is the meaning the word has in everyday language; the other is the meaning that same word has in Dhamma language. A discerning person must consider both meanings as has been done in the numerous examples discussed. But the words considered thus far are terms especially relevant to the language of Buddhism.



Let us now consider some more down-to-earth examples. I apologize if some of these appear a little crude.

Take the word "eating." In everyday language, to eat is to take in nourishment through the mouth in the usual way. But the eating of Dhamma language can be done by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind. The eye sees a form, the ear hears a sound, the nose smells an odor, and it is much like eating, eating by way of eye, ear, nose, and so on. This is Dhamma language. For instance, in Pāli and Sanskrit the word *kāmabhogin* was commonly used to refer to a person who indulged in sensuality. Literally, this word means simply "sensuality eater." The Pāli and Sanskrit also have the peculiar expression "eating a woman." To eat a woman did not mean to carry her off and kill, cook, and eat her. It meant to have sexual relations with a woman. Eating on the Dhammic level refers to a wide variety of sensual attachments. By way of contrast, the Pāli word *nibbhogin* ("nothing to eat") was used in reference to the Buddha and other *arahant*-s ("fully enlightened men"), who were no longer subject to colors and shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile stimuli, and mental images. They were above involvement in these six kinds of objects and were, therefore, people with *nothing to eat*.

Next to eating, sleeping is referred to as one of the major necessities of life. When we use this word in the sense of lying down and sleeping like a dog or cat, we are speaking everyday language. But in Dhamma language sleeping refers to absence of insight (*avijjā*). Though a person may be sitting up with eyes wide open, if he is ignorant of the true nature of things he can be said to be asleep. Sleeping in Dhamma language is to live

in ignorance of the true nature of things, regardless of bodily posture.

Sleep is complemented by wakefulness. To be awake normally means to have roused oneself from sleep. But in Dhamma language it means to be always mindful, to be always fully aware. In this condition, regardless of whether one is physically awake or asleep, one can be described as awake. A person who practices mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) consistently is always totally aware. Even when he retires to sleep, within his sleeping consciousness he is aware. When he is awake he is awake, but, paradoxically, when he is asleep he is also awake.

While one is awake one divides one's time between work and play. To play, in the language of the ordinary person, is to amuse oneself as do children with games, sports, laughter, and good fun. But in Dhamma language, to play is to rejoice in the Dhamma, to be joyful over the Dhamma. Even the bliss associated with the deeper stages of concentration (*jhāna*) was called in Pāli *jhāna-kīlā* ("concentration games"). This is the play of the Ariyans (those well advanced in the practice). This is what play means in Dhamma language.

Glancing about us, we notice there are a whole series of words describing human relationships. These words would include "father" and "mother," "friend" and "enemy." In ordinary worldly language father and mother refer to the two people responsible for our having been born. But in the deeper language of Dhamma, our father is lack of insight (*avijjā*) and our mother is craving (*taṇhā*). They have to be gotten rid of completely. For instance, the Buddha said: "Be ungrateful. Kill the 'father,' kill the 'mother,' and you will attain Nibbāna."

Our father, the man responsible for our birth, is lack of insight; our mother, the woman responsible for our birth, is craving. The words "father" and "mother" in Dhamma language were given these higher meanings by the Buddha. In this sense the parents have to be killed, destroyed completely, before Nibbāna can be attained.

The word "friend" in everyday language refers to a companion, someone with whom we get along well. But in Dhamma language friend or companion refers to the Dhamma, and in particular to that aspect of the Dhamma which enables us to free ourselves from the unsatisfactory condition, or suffering (*dukkha*). The Buddha specifically mentioned the Noble Eightfold Path as man's best friend. In Dhamma language friend means the Noble Eightfold Path, right understanding, right intention, and so on.

An enemy in everyday language is someone whom we hate and who wants to harm us. But our enemy, as this word is understood in Dhamma language, is our own misdirected mind. Our very own mind and the misuse of it—that is our real enemy. The misdirected mind is the enemy, not someone else outside. The enemy to which the ordinary person refers is the enemy of everyday worldly language. The enemy of Dhamma language is the misdirected mind. The enemy of the misdirected mind is born in the mind and of the mind. With the mind well directed and fixed on Dhamma, the enemy is absent, and the friend is there instead.

All the terms that we have considered are nothing but perfectly ordinary words selected in order to demonstrate the difference between everyday language and Dhamma language. If you think it over, you will realize that this difference is the very reason we fail to understand Buddha-Dhamma. We do not understand this highest and

most profound of teachings simply because we do not know the language of Dhamma. We know only everyday language and are unable to comprehend the language of the Ariyans.

Consider, for example, laughter. The Buddha once said, "Laughter is the behavior of a little child in its cot." We like to laugh heartily even though it resembles behavior of a little child. We do not want to give it up. We go right on laughing heartily, guffawing loudly. Why did the Buddha say, "Laughter is the behavior of a little child in its cot"? Think of a little child in its cot, the way it lies there gurgling and grinning at you. The laughter of the Ariyans is different. They laugh at all compounded things (*sankhāra*), which are impermanent and changing, unsatisfactory, and not selves. They know and so can laugh at compounded things and at craving which henceforth can do them no harm. This is the right kind of laughter, the kind that has meaning and worth.

Or consider singing and dancing. Singing, such as we hear on the radio, is just like someone weeping. In singing, the actions of mouth, throat, vocal cords, and tongue are just the same as they are in weeping. But if it is a real song, the song of the Ariyans, then it is a paean of joy at having seen the Dhamma. It proclaims the Dhamma and it proclaims satisfaction in the Dhamma. Again, consider dancing which is so popular. People make a special effort to learn how to dance and spend money to have their sons and daughters learn also. The Ariyans regard such dancing as the antics of madmen. Clearly, forms of contemporary social dancing closely resemble the antics of madmen! But the dancing of the Ariyans is *dhamma-nandī* ("Dhamma dancing"). They get up and dance and jeer at the defilements, proclaiming their liberation. They

are not bound hand and foot, arm and leg. Their limbs are free. They can dance because they are not fettered by the four attachments. This is how the Ariyans dance.

If we know only the language of everyday, we cannot possibly understand this kind of talk. The wise man says, "The bird sees not the sky," and the foolish man does not believe it. Why does a bird not see the sky? Because it is flying *in* the sky. The wise man says, "The fish sees not the water," and again the foolish man does not understand. It has never occurred to him that a fish living in water cannot see the water with which it is in daily contact. Likewise, an earthworm always burrowing in the earth never sees the earth. And a maggot that lives in a dung heap, is born in the dung heap, and dies in the dung heap, never sees it. "Man sees not the world." A man, living and moving about in the world, still does not *see* the world. If he had truly seen the world, he certainly would not remain bound by it. He would be sure to transcend the world and realize the Truth. A man who is bogged down in the world does not know Dhamma language. He is stuck fast in the world like the maggot in its dung heap, the earthworm in the ground, the fish in the water, or the bird in the sky. Not knowing Dhamma language, he cannot comprehend Dhamma.

Here is a good example of Dhamma language: "Walking, walking, and never arriving." The average man will not grasp its meaning. Here, "walking" refers to wanting something and going off in search of it. "Never arriving" refers to peace, Nibbāna, which remains unattainable. Nibbāna is attained by *not* desiring, *not* yearning. There is no need to walk at all. By not walking, Nibbāna will be attained. Walking, walking, and never arriving. Wanting, wanting, and never attaining. The more we want

something, the more inaccessible it becomes. We must completely give up wanting, and then we might attain to it.

On the subject of talking it is said, in Dhamma language, "Talk and you will hear nothing; be silent and you will hear." If the mind is well concentrated, still, and quiet, the voice of Dhamma will be heard. Again it is said, "These things that can be talked about are not the real Dhamma; about the real Dhamma nothing can be said." All that I have been saying is not Dhamma, not the real thing. It is nothing more than words attempting to explain how to arrive at the real thing. The real thing cannot be talked about. The more we say about Dhamma, the farther it recedes from us. All we can talk about is the method that will guide us along, that will explain what we might do in order to arrive at the real thing, the genuine Dhamma. So it is best to give up talking.

This being the case, we shall terminate our discussion of everyday language and Dhamma language. Some of us have been listening to sermons and lectures and expositions of Dhamma for ten years, twenty years, or thirty years. Why is it, then, that we still do not understand Dhamma, see Dhamma, or penetrate to Dhamma? The reason we do not understand is simply that we have not listened in the right way. We are familiar only with everyday language and are unable to understand Dhamma language. We hear Dhamma language and take it as everyday language. We are just like those foolish people who, taking the word "emptiness" in its everyday sense, misunderstand the subject completely and then make ridiculous assertions about it.

A person who does not understand both everyday language *and* Dhamma language lacks discernment, the qual-

ity the Buddha was referring to when he said, "He who is familiar with the various modes of speaking is a wise man" and "A wise man is one familiar with both modes of speaking."

# IV

## NO RELIGION!

MEETING WITH YOU on this occasion I feel there is something that prevents us from understanding each other. That is none other than the problem of language itself. Language as it is conventionally spoken we will call everyday language, the language of the common man. This is one kind of language. But there is another language spoken by those who know true reality, or Dhamma. This is Dhamma language, the language of higher or inner truth. People who are blind to Reality speak and understand only the conventional language of ordinary people. On the other hand, the person who has genuinely realized the ultimate Truth can speak either one. He can utilize everyday language quite well and is also comfortable using Dhamma language, especially when speaking with someone else who has already realized the Truth (Dhamma). When only the higher truths of Dhamma are discussed, the language will be unintelligible to ordinary people. "Inner" language is understood only by those who have realized the Truth. What is more, the language of Dhamma does not even demand verbalization; hence, a pointed finger or a raised eyebrow may communicate an ultimate meaning.



The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there are many religions and that they are all different to the extent of being hostile and opposed. Thus he considers Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as incompatible and even bitter enemies. Such is the conception of the common man who speaks according to the impressions held by common people. Precisely because of speech like this there exist different religions hostilely opposed to one another. If, however, a person has penetrated to the fundamental nature (Dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although he may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, he will also say that essentially they are all the same. If he should go on to a deeper understanding of Dhamma until finally he realizes the absolute Truth, he would discover that there is no such thing called religion—that there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. Therefore, how can they be the same or conflicting? Thus the phrase “No religion!” is actually Dhamma language at its highest level. Whether it will be understood or not is something else, for this depends upon the perception of the listener.

Let us consider a simile, something very simple—water. Most people think there are many different kinds of water. The average person will view various kinds of water as if they have nothing in common. He sees rainwater, well water, underground water, water in canals, water in swamps, water in ditches, water in gutters, water in sewers, water in toilets, urine water, and so on. The common man will insist that they are completely different because his judgment depends on external criteria. A person with some knowledge, however, knows that no matter what kind of water, pure water can be distilled out of it. Distill rainwater, river water, or even sewer water and

you will find pure water. The elements that combine to make different-appearing types of water may alter or pollute it, but essentially these different forms are the same. If you proceed further with your analysis of pure water, you will conclude that there is no water—only two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. Hydrogen and oxygen are not water. The substance that we have been calling water has disappeared. It is void, empty.

Two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen are the same everywhere, wherever they may happen to be found; the substance water has ceased to exist, and we no longer need to use the term “water.” For one who has penetrated to the truth at this level there is no such thing as water. In the same way, one who has attained to the ultimate Truth sees that there is no such thing as religion! There is only Reality or Nature. Call it whatever you like—Dhamma or Truth—but you cannot particularize that Dhamma or Truth as Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam, for whatever it is, you cannot define it by giving it labels. The reason the division of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam exists is that the Truth has not yet been realized. Only outer forms are being taken into account, just as with canal water, muddy water, and the rest.

The Buddha intended for us to understand and be able to see that there is no person, there is no individual—only Dhammas or real existents. Similarly, particular religions are not ultimately distinguishable. The label “Buddhism” was attached only after the fact, as it was with Christianity, Islam, and every other religion. None of the great religious teachers ever gave a name to their teachings; they just went on teaching throughout their lives about how we should live.

When the ultimate level is reached, when the ultimate

is known, then not even man exists. There is only Nature, only Dhamma. It cannot be considered to be any particular thing because it cannot be a thing; it cannot be anything other than Dhamma. It cannot be Thai or Chinese, black or white, Eastern or Western. Nor can it be Buddhist or Christian or Islamic or anything else. When this Dhamma is reached, you will have reached the heart of all religions and of all things, and finally come to the complete cessation of suffering.

Although we call ourselves Buddhists and profess Buddhism, we have not yet attained the Truth of Buddhism, since we are acquainted with only a tiny aspect of our own Buddhism. Although we be a monk, novice, or layman, we are aware of only the shell, the outer covering, which makes us think Buddhism is different from this or that religion. Because we have failed to understand and realize our own essential nature, we look down upon other religions, while praising and supporting our own and thinking of ourselves as a separate group. Outsiders are not part of our fellowship. They are wrong; only we are right. Such judgments show our ignorance and foolishness. We are just like little babies who know only their own bellies. When you tell a small child to take a bath and ask him to wash with soap to get all the dirt off, the little child will scrub only his belly; he does not know to wash all over. He will never think of washing behind his ears or between his toes. In this same way, the perception of most adherents of Buddhism is limited to what they can do to get a reward. While supporting the temples or monks and observing the precepts, they have only the objective of getting more in return than they give. When they make offerings, some expect back ten times what they give, others a hundred times, and some even a thou-

sand. Such people know nothing about Buddhism at all, for they are acquainted only with how to get and how to take. That is not Buddhism. It is the religion of getting; the religion of taking. Real Buddhism is to know how to get without getting, and take without taking, so that there is no frustration and no suffering.

The heart of Buddhism is not getting things but getting rid of them. It is, in other words, nonattachment, not seizing or grasping anything, not even the religion itself, until finally it is seen that there is no Buddhism. To speak more precisely, that means there is no Buddha, there is no Dhamma, there is no Sangha! If it is expressed in this way, however, nobody will understand. They will be shocked and frightened instead.

If people understood, they would see that the Buddha, the Dhamma (teachings), and the Sangha are the same. They would see them as being Dhamma, the true nature of things. They would not feel compelled to seize and hang on to their religion as that particular thing or this particular idea. Buddhism is just Dhamma, the Truth, a pure state, or whatever it is that you decide to label it.

But most of us dare not think this way! We are afraid even to think that there is no religion, no Buddha, no Dhamma, no Sangha. Even if people were forced to think or taught to think in this way, they still would not be able to understand. In fact, they would probably have a totally distorted viewpoint and react in the opposite way than was intended. For this reason, after the passing away of the Buddha there appeared many new systems of religious practice at various levels. If one wished to make offerings in order to gain benefits in return, it could be done. It evolved that merit became bait to attract people and to draw them into religion as a preliminary step.

Through practice it was thought that eventually the people would grow beyond merit-making activities, because they are ultimately unsatisfying and lead to suffering. The next step on the way of Dhamma is to voluntarily choose to live a plain and simple life, a pure life, without being led astray or intoxicated by anything. Though there is still a consciousness of a self who is enjoying this mode of happiness, it is higher than performing merit-making activities to gain a reward. In the highest level of Dhamma no trace of self remains. It is all over; nothing more is left to be done. The mind is no longer obsessed by the impression of an ego. Frustration and suffering are transcended, since there is no "I" to suffer. Then, as it is said in everyday language, there is real happiness. In Dhamma language, however, there is not anything—nothing to get, nothing to have, nothing to be, nothing at all—and this is called "being void." Everything still exists, but all awareness of it in terms of "I" or "mine" is voided.

To see things as void is to see them as not being an aspect of oneself, or in any way possessed by oneself. The word "void" in the common language of ignorant people means nothing exists, but in the language of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, void means everything exists, but without attachment. Hence, they are void—free from being grasped and clung to as "I" or "mine."

Whenever a thought or feeling involving ego-awareness arises, suffering ensues at once, and the suffering always befits that particular concept of "I." If "I" is human, it suffers like a human. If "I" is an angel, it suffers like an angel. Depending on the variations in the manner of the grasping and clinging of the ego to existence, there can also be birth as a denizen in hell, a beast, a hungry ghost (*peta*) or an *asura* (demon). In one day you may go

through many births or many dozens of births, and every birth in such a manner is unsatisfactory, frustrating, and inseparable from suffering. To destroy this birth process is Nibbāna.

There is no need to speak about what happens after death. What is the point of talking about the state of being buried in the ground? It is irrelevant and completely unnecessary. First deal with the present problem of not being born. If you can understand the nature of your present life, you will not have to suffer anymore. When the process of continual rebirth is negated, there is no more self. This is freedom from ego. "I" becomes an empty concept—void—and that disposes of the problem. It is as simple as that. The question of the amount of time remaining in your life-span becomes meaningless, because time and the future cease to exist as soon as you discover how to prevent the birth of ego from ever occurring again. This state can be called nonbirth, or it may be called death.

The words "birth" and "death" have opposite meanings in everyday language and Dhamma language. The same situation exists in the scriptures of other religions, especially Christianity. As a result, Christians often do not understand their own Bible, just as Buddhists do not understand Buddhist scriptures.

In Christianity we find that Jesus Christ sacrificed his life to atone for the sins of mankind, and also that Jesus said, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). This shows that the word "life" has more than one meaning. Matthew 20:28 reads, "[He surrendered] his life as a ransom for many." Here, life is used in its everyday-language sense: he submitted to being killed by others and, thus, to losing his life. Life in the

passage "If you would enter *life*, keep the commandments" is the identical word, but the life referred to here is not a life that can die. It is a life that will never know death.

The word "die" in everyday language means to die or be killed. However, die in the language of God and as used by God with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has quite a different meaning. God told Adam not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17). Eventually, Adam and Eve ate the fruit, but we know that they did not die that same day. That is, their bodies did not die but they died in the Dhamma-language sense, a spiritual death which is much crueller than being buried in a coffin. Sin was newly born in their minds, as large and substantial as the Lauka Mountain, for they began to think in dualistic terms—good or evil, male or female, dressed or nude, husband or wife, and so on—to the point that their minds were flooded by indescribable sufferings. This mode of perception has been passed down to the present era. Consequently, the act of Adam and Eve is termed original sin. Death, in the original-sin sense, occurs whenever we partake of the fruit of dualism. At that very moment we die.

This meaning of death in the Christian language is similar to its meaning in the language of the Buddha. Both traditions point to the same truth, the truth about attachment and dualism, because whenever dualistic thoughts arise, there is bound to be suffering equivalent to dying. In death all goodness has ceased. It is the end of happiness and peace when all the most worthwhile qualities have disintegrated. In the Dhammic sense everyone dies every day. It is a dying symbolized by frustration, worry, restlessness, and anxiety.

To be resolved not to die is to be in accord with the Buddha's teaching and in line with the objective of Buddhism. It is to refuse to be dominated by the original sin of dualistic thinking. The true nature of Dhamma is that in reality there is no duality of any sort—no gain or loss, no happiness or suffering, no good or evil, no merit or sin, no male or female. There is absolutely nothing at all that can be divided and separated into opposite poles. Such dualism is the basis of all attachment, so do not cling to a dualistic outlook. Be detached. Understand that there is nothing to be seized and held on to because everything is impermanent and only relative to the moment. Work with a mind that clings to nothing and is free from all forms of attachment. Such an attitude is called "working with a void mind."

Perform every kind of task with a void mind, whether at the office or at home. Even resting and recreation should be done with a void mind, a mind that always remains detached and free. If you work with an agitated mind, a mind that is restless, always grasping and clinging to one thing or one idea after another, a mind that is overburdened with attachments, there is suffering and you will be born in a lowly state (*apāya*) right then and there as a denizen in hell, a beast, a hungry ghost, or an *asura*. To overcome this original sin you should work and live without attachments.

Do work of all kinds with a mind that is void,  
And then to the voidness give all of the fruits,  
Take food of the voidness as do Holy Saints:  
And lo! You are dead to yourself from the very  
beginning.

Every kind of work should be done with a void mind.



Many people, unfortunately, have restless or agitated minds filled with the dark clouds of delusion. Consequently, they worry and are gloomy and insecure. Eventually they may suffer severe depression and nervous breakdowns. Regardless of position, intellect, and sophistication, disorders of the mind, diseases of insecurity, anxiety, and neurosis, result from clutching at and clinging to such things as fame and money and being caught up in such matters as profit and loss, happiness and unhappiness, ease and dis-ease, praise and blame.

Seek therefore to transcend these concerns. Free yourself from all such attachment and your mind will be void. You will then be a wise person with a sharp and clear mind. With such a void mind, work will be carried out without the least bit of frustration or suffering. Sometimes it will even seem to be what we might term "Dhammic fun," or a lightheartedness produced by detached understanding. Work in a Dhammic sense makes no distinction between sacred and profane activities. In this sense all work is practice of the Dhamma, whether it be physical or mental exertion, worshiping at the temple or plowing in the fields. Work as Dhamma practice is, simply, working without grasping, clasping, or clinging. Accordingly, whether you are engaged in training the mind to be detached and calm or whether you are working to earn a living in some occupation or another, if you do so with a void mind that forms no attachments, there is the practice of Dhamma. To work without getting involved in interfering thoughts is what is meant by "Do work of all kinds with a mind that is void."

The second line of the verse reads, "And then to the voidness give all of the fruits." When your work bears the fruit of money and fame it must be given to the void.

Do not seize and cling to the idea that these are things which "belong to me," that this is "my success" or "my superiority." Most people let themselves become attached to the taste of success and the rewards that go with it, adding to those desires in the mind which are dark and corrupt (*kilesa*). Such blindness leads to both mental and physical suffering.

The Buddhist teaching on nonattachment is not unique. In fact, it can be found in every religion on the level of Dhamma language. Its meaning is deep and profound, not easy to see and very often not understood correctly. Many religious people do not grasp their own tradition very deeply. For instance, we find in the New Testament that it is said, "Let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods." This teaching is to be understood in the same way as our basic theme of nonattachment. That is, if you have a wife, do not be attached to her; if you incur sorrow or suffering, act as though it never happened and thereby overcome it.

Unfortunately, most people are dominated by their desires. They let themselves suffer intolerably over attachments and disappointments. As the Biblical quotation points out, however, we should buy things as though we were getting nothing and had overcome a sense of possession. The passage ". . . buy as though they had no goods" has the same meaning as "Do work of all kinds with a mind that is void, and then to the voidness give all of the fruits."

The third line of our poem is, "Take food of the voidness as do Holy Saints." But what do we eat if everything

is void or given over to voidness? The point is that once we can work with a void mind and turn all profits over to the void, the void becomes our nourisher.

Suppose you work and earn one million bahts (or dollars or pounds). To put it in the bank would be analogous to giving it to the void. You need not cling to the money or even think about it. Do not think, "It is mine! It belongs to me" and you will not be attached to it. When you utilize it for expenses, do so with the same void mind. Simply use the money for whatever is necessary, without attachment. This is like taking "food of the voidness as do Holy Saints."

In this line, "Holy Saints," or *ariya*, means those who know, who are enlightened. We ourselves ought to take food in the same way that these liberated ones eat. The Buddha and the enlightened ones all ate food. It is not the case that one who has become a Buddha does not have to eat food; however, having received food, they always ate the food of voidness. They consumed food without any feeling of possession or attachment and without being concerned with what or how much they were eating. Here is one example of "Take food of the voidness as do Holy Saints." All of us have the same opportunity. When you give all the rewards of your work to the void, they do not go anywhere. They are not lost, but you are not attached to them.

The fourth and last line of the poem reads, "And lo! You are dead to yourself from the very beginning." You have died already inside. That precious inner "you" is gone from the first moment. That is, when you go back through the past and reflect upon it with clarity, awareness, and wisdom, you will know that there is no person, no you. You will see that there are only the five com-

ponent processes (*khandha*), the six sense operations (*ayātana*), the eighteen constituents (*dhātu*) or simply natural phenomena.<sup>12</sup>

Although we may have been attached to these phenomena, believing them to be part (or the parts) of ourselves, such is no longer the case. That self has died; it has been dead from the very beginning. Previously we had been deluded into thinking in terms of "I," and we were intoxicated. We became attached to the idea that there really existed an "I" inside, and that this "I" could possess things. Now we know the truth: there is no "I," no "me," nothing that can "belong to me," nothing that can "be me." "I" has been dying ever since the beginning until now, and it will continually be dying in the future.

This does not mean that one physically kills oneself. The body is only an outer shell. The self to which we are referring is merely a mental concept created for convenience (in communication). There is nothing substantial or permanent upon which it is based. There is only an ever-changing process which is misconstrued to be a permanent entity, an "ego." Do not let thoughts or feelings based on "I" or "mine" arise. That is all. What is referred to as the self is constituted of the five component processes (*pañca-khandha*) only. They are pure by nature. That is, they are without pollutions, desires (*kilesa*, *taṇhā*). They cling to nothing; neither are they a basis of attachment (*upādāna*). It is, rather, mental misconceptions that are the pollutions (*kilesa*) responsible for attachment. Try not to let the conditions that produce them take place. In this way you can force your self to die. Do not let the grasping ego influence your thoughts and feelings, nor your awareness be shaped by

"I" and "mine." There being nothing to be thought of as "I" and nothing to feel attached to as "mine," where can suffering take place? Suffering must happen to an "I"; therefore, possessing "I" and "mine" is the real root of suffering. Pull out the root. That is the real cure. As for happiness, as soon as you strain for it, cling to it, and are attached to it, it becomes unhappiness, one more way to suffer.

Ignorant people always have attachment in one form or another to everything that is or is not. As a result, desirable things are converted into causes of suffering. Good itself is transformed into suffering. Praise, fame, honor, and the like are all turned into forms of suffering as soon as one tries to seize and hang on to them. Everything becomes unsatisfactory because of grasping and clinging. Whether good or evil, merit or sin, happiness or unhappiness, gain or loss—all dualistic concepts become causes of suffering whenever you are attached to one or the other.

When you are wise enough not to cling or be attached to any particular forms, you will no longer have to suffer because of these things. Good and evil, happiness and sufferings, merit and sin—all are an ordinary part of nature and naturally void. There is no suffering inherent in any of them.

Such a viewpoint results from not having an ego, of not being attached to "myself," of not conceiving relationships to anything in terms of "I." The terms "I" and "my" exist only on a conventional level but not in the mind or heart, or as Paul said, "Let those who have wives live as though they had none, . . . those who mourn as though they were not mourning, . . . those who buy as though they had no goods."

Externally we shall behave the same way as others—eat like they eat, work like they work, and speak like they speak, using such expressions as “That is my house” and “This is mine.” The mind, however, is void. Outside appearances are one thing, but a man’s heart may be quite another. For example, outwardly the man of Dhamma may appear to have wealth, a family, honor, and fame. Inside, however, there is nothing. In his mind he possesses nothing. A Thai saying refers to this as “The mouth is one way but the mind another,” or, in other words, outwardly one may be indistinguishable from the profane man, but inwardly one’s mind is void. Outwardly one may possess all the things that others possess, but the mind possesses nothing.

In a similar fashion, the Buddha taught us not to be ostentatious, and Jesus Christ emphasized humility. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about practicing piety in secret, for if it is something you want others to see, then it becomes a form of attachment. He advised his followers that while observing the Sabbath they should apply powder and perfumes as usual, so as not to let anyone know they were observing the Sabbath, although they should continue to keep the Sabbath strictly. Jesus also taught that if you wish to give alms or make a donation to charity, do so secretly, not letting others know who the giver is.

The basic theme of this teaching is nonattachment. Jesus wanted to point out that acting in a nonegoistic way helps to destroy impurities (*kilesa*). One should realize that to make an offering as a religious act *without letting others know* can wipe out pollutions (*kilesa*) from the mind of the giver, unlike giving in an ostentatious manner which only enhances grasping. There is a popular saying

in Thailand about putting gold leaf on a statue's back.<sup>13</sup> On a conventional level it is interpreted to mean that one should never do this, for by sticking gold leaf on the back of a statue of Buddha, one will not receive honor or merit. On the other hand, a wise man realizes that putting gold leaf on the back of a statue is a desirable thing to do. He does not want the recognition or acknowledgment of society. In such a manner he gains more honor than if he were to practice merit by sticking gold on the face of the statue. Therefore, sticking gold leaf on a statue's back and practicing piety in secret have the same essential meaning: to destroy attachment without an eye to personal gain or praise, to keep uprooting attachments until at last you can say there is nothing—no "I," no good or evil, no merit or sin, no happiness or suffering—until finally there is "no religion."

Now let us turn our attention to the fact that non-attachment, which is the highest Dhamma or Truth, is something wonderful, valuable, and extraordinary. It is the heart of every religion. It is the essence of Dhamma. If there is a God, he is to be found here.

The Dhamma of nonattachment is wonderful precisely because whoever wishes to obtain it can do so without making an investment. No money is needed, not a single penny. According to ordinary language nothing can be obtained without an investment. From a conventional perspective, if you wish to gain merit, you have to pay in coin or else invest labor. On the level of Dhamma language, however, it is quite different. The Buddha said that Nibbāna is free of charge. The New Testament records a similar saying. Jesus said no less than three times to come and drink the water of life without paying

a price. "Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price." (Rev. 22:17.) This New Testament passage is identical to the Buddha's claims. The Buddha said that the Noble Path (*magga*), the Noble Fruit (*phala*), and Nibbāna are not gained by monetary investment or earned by labor. To live according to the Noble Eightfold Path means simply to give up everything and take nothing. It is not necessary to pay anything in order to partake of the Noble Path, the Noble Fruit, and Nibbāna. You cannot earn the taste of the flavor of Nibbāna. In fact, however, some people spend a lot of money trying to buy Nibbāna. Such people are thwarting themselves. It is like the Christian who invests money to reach heaven. How ridiculous! The two have nothing to do with each other. In fact, they are incompatible. If you want to give to charity, do so sincerely for the sake of others. We make donations to help our fellow human beings attain those things which necessitate some financial investment; therefore, we contribute money to build temples and schools in order to enable our fellow human beings to travel on the right path, to tread that path until finally they reach that which is obtained without payment—that which is called Nibbāna.

Those who plan to gain merit by the strength of their wealth are advised to change their minds, since they incur losses rather than profits. To act in such a way goes contrary to the words of the Buddha when he said, "Dhamma (Truth) is free." Jesus said the same, adding, "You received without pay, give without pay" (Matt. 10:8). If Truth is obtained free, it must be passed on free too. Do not be unwilling or reluctant. Do not expect gratitude or the gifts of a student to his teacher. Such is



inappropriate. When you get something for free, give it away for free. Therefore, as the loftiest of all things, the Dhamma of religion is something to be gained and given free. Once you have received it you are bound to pass it on to your fellow human beings also. Do not make a show about it and do not expect anything in return. Making a contribution to a religious cause is for a different purpose. It has no bearing on attaining Nibbāna. In effect, it will be instrumental in helping people who have been blind to the way to see the way and eventually arrive at that which is obtained free.

Looking carefully you will see that this precious thing, this most wonderful of all wonderful things, this excellence which is obtained free, is that which is called Nibbāna—or, for that matter, whatever you prefer to call it. Jesus called it life. This state that we exist in now is not to be regarded as living. Rather, it is dying. To follow the teachings of Jesus means one is born again. You must die first and then be born anew. When you are born anew you are born into eternal life which is true life. (John 3:3–8.)

The Buddha spoke in the same fashion. He said that one who does not know this existence is like dying is suffering. We must know clearly or be enlightened in order to awake to a new world. Then an end to suffering will come into being. But we must realize and understand our condition before we can be freed from it. What happened in the past was death, suffering and dying, because of the “I” and “my.” Now we are born anew into eternal life, “Nibbānic” life, the deathless life, the deathless state, the deathless—whatever you care to call it. “I” and “mine” cease. The word “reborn” comes to mean a life with no ego, no “I,” a life that cannot die. The

five component processes (*khandha*) have now been purified and are called the pure component processes (*visuddhi-khandha*). The mind and body are no longer respondent to polluting desires and attachments. Prior to this realization the five component processes were continually stained by the corrupt attachments centering around "I" and "my." Death was always present. When the pollutions of desires and attachments are completely eradicated there is a rebirth in the world of the noble ones (*ariya*). "Rebirth in the world of the noble ones" is an ordinary language expression. In Dhamma language it is "the extinction of 'I.'" There remains only voidness, which is Nibbāna.

If we speak in ordinary language, as did Jesus, we say that one is reborn in the world of the noble ones or that one lives eternally in the Kingdom of God. Translated into Dhamma language it has the same meaning as in Buddhism. One language speaks of "rebirth," whereas the other talks about "complete extinction." Only the words are different. In ordinary language we talk about being reborn. In Dhamma language we talk about extinction. Let us live a life of extinguishing and of quenching the heat of blind attachment, a life of coolness. To burn in this sense is to die. A person who is a flame is like a denizen in hell, an animal, a hungry ghost, or an *asura* (demon). Such a person is continually dying. His attachment to "I" is not yet extinct. His ego boils and bubbles inside him with the heat of fire. It must be overcome in order to "simmer down" and "cool off" or to gain Nibbāna.

Nibbāna literally means to become cooler. In India at the time of the Buddha, this word was spoken in the houses and the streets. It was a common everyday word.

When something hot had cooled down people used the word "nibbāna" to describe it. If curry was very hot and then it "nibbāned," they would say, "The curry is 'nibbāna,' so let's eat." Nibbāna, then, in its ordinary, everyday usage implies the cooling down of anything that is hot. When man is burning and boiling like a denizen in hell, we say that he is still hot and not yet "nibbāna." After he discovers the way to apply Dhamma to cool himself, he is "nibbānaing." He then "nibbānas" until he finally attains complete Nibbāna and is absolutely cool.

Even now there is Nibbāna in us to some extent. That is why you are able to sit and listen to such talks as the one today. Otherwise, if the flames were flaring up within you now, you would not be able to remain sitting here. We should understand that Nibbāna is related to us at all times like the air we breathe in and out. If this were not so, if Nibbāna were not present at all, we would be burned up and die because of its absence. Sometimes Nibbāna disappears temporarily, that is to say, whenever we give vent to lust or ill will in any form or whenever we are deluded. However, when lust, ill will, and delusion are not present in our minds, we experience a small degree of Nibbāna. Because of these recurring glimpses of Nibbāna which we catch when not under the influence of lust, ill will, and delusion, we are kept from dying. We live by virtue of the beneficial effects of Nibbāna. Therefore, we should be thankful and acknowledge our gratitude to Nibbāna by increasingly calming down and cooling down through the gradual destruction of "I."

Rather than aggrandizing the self through pride, it must be reduced by developing self-discipline. Whenever you quarrel out of vanity or stubbornness, you have lost touch with Nibbāna. People who quarrel, who interfere

with others or lose patience with others, lose their humanity. They are not really human beings and are depraved. Thus, people who argue that other religions are different and incompatible with their own, thereby causing hostility, persecution, and mutual destruction, are the most stupid and ignorant of people.

When religions are regarded as in opposition and conflict, people become enemies as a result. Everyone thinks, "We are right; they are wrong," until there is quarreling and fighting. Such people only display their foolishness. What they are quarreling about is only the outer form and not the inner essence. When people of intelligence and wisdom get together over essential matters concerning religions, they recognize that religions are all the same. Though outwardly they may be different, they know that the inner spirit must be the same in all cases. The inner essence is similar no matter how different the external forms, just as in the analogy of water. The essential nature of water is always the same no matter how filthy it appears on the outside. The water is not dirty. It is the other elements mixed in with the water that are dirty.

Whenever there is a quarrel, whether it is among lay people, monks, or novices, it might be likened to people drinking polluted water. In this case the pollutant is prideful and egoistic self-assertion which must be purified, just as impure water must be distilled before it is consumed. Unfortunately, the older a person gets, the more full of ego he often grows. His attachments accumulate and his egoism reflects itself in regard to his children. He refers to "my son" or says, "How could he do that without 'my' permission?" It can be said that elderly people are more obsessed with "I" and "mine"

than children are. In the early years of childhood a small child has but very little sense of possessing a self. Immediately after birth it is very difficult to find any traces of ego, and the child in the womb has hardly any awareness in terms of "I am" or "I have." However, as one grows into adulthood and becomes a father or mother and then a grandfather or grandmother, a strong feeling of "myself" develops. "I-my" becomes rooted in the feelings and modes of thought in many ways and forms, and it clings and sticks there with such tenacity that it is very difficult to remove.

Older people should be careful and alert and try to return to being children again. Such a process involves living in accordance with Dhamma; it is a path that leads to the void; it is the path of nonattachment. Ideally, as one grows older one should approach nearer to the Buddha. Or, in other terms, the more you age, the younger you should be; the older you get, the more youthful you should become. Everybody should become bright and lighthearted as they grow older and come to know more and more of Dhamma. The more successful you are in making the inner flames recede, the cooler you become. As you get cooler, you feel increasingly refreshed, brighter, and more lively. When you have grown totally cool you will sparkle with brightness and cheer. Therefore, the older you get, the more youthful you should become and the more cheerful and fresh you should look and feel.

The lively physical activity and fresh complexion of youth is a different matter altogether. In Dhamma language, to be lively and fresh refers to a spiritual brightness, vigor, and serenity. It means to be closer to Dhamma and to absorb more of it. In this realization

the heat of attachment subsides and the coolness of detachment spreads and envelops you. Ethically this state manifests itself in overcoming hatred, pride, and delusion. It leads to the cessation of quarreling, bickering, and backbiting. To exhibit such qualities is to cease to be a Buddhist in the true sense of the word. Just saying you are Buddhist means nothing. To regard yourself as Buddhist because of a birth certificate or as a result of signing the register in a temple is useless. To be genuine Buddhists in the true sense of the word means to weaken and reduce "I" and "mine" in order to become cool, to grow closer to Nibbāna.

In the higher grades of realization there is no "I" and "mine." Everything is void of self and there is no Buddhism, no Christianity, no Islam, for how can they exist since there is no "we," no "they," no "anybody"! There is nothing but Dhamma, *suddhadhammā pavattanti*, just pure phenomena in constant flux. There is only Nature (Dhamma), either in its conditioned (*sankhata-dhamma*) or unconditioned (*asankhata-dhamma*) form. The man who realizes this truth is freed from clinging. He is enlightened and is Buddha.

# V

## HANDBOOK FOR MANKIND<sup>14</sup>

### THE TRUE NATURE OF THINGS

The word "religion" has a broader meaning than the word "morality." Morality has to do with behavior and happiness and is basically the same the world over. A religion is a system of practice of a higher order. The ways of practice advocated by various religions differ greatly.

Morality has us be good people, behaving in accordance with the general principles of community life and in such a way as to cause no distress to ourselves or others. But though a person may be thoroughly moral, he may still be far from free from the suffering attendant on birth, aging, pain, and death, still not free from oppression by the mental defilements. Morality stops well short of the elimination of craving, aversion, and delusion; therefore, it cannot do away with suffering. Religion, particularly Buddhism, goes much farther than this. It aims directly at the complete elimination of the defilements; that is, it aims at extinguishing the various kinds of suffering attendant on birth, aging, pain, and death. This indicates how religion differs from mere morality and how much farther Buddhism goes than do the moral



systems of the world in general. Having understood this, we can now turn our attention to Buddhism itself.

*Buddhism is a system designed to provide a technical knowledge inseparable from its technique of practice, an organized practical understanding of the true nature of things or what is what.* Examine yourself and see whether or not you know *what is what*. Even if you know what you are yourself, what life is, what work, duty, livelihood, money, possessions, honor, and fame are, would you dare to claim that you knew everything? If we really knew what is what, we would never act inappropriately, and if we always acted appropriately, it is a certainty that we would never be subject to suffering. As it is, we are ignorant of the true nature of things; thus our behavior results in suffering. Buddhist practice is designed to teach us how things really are. To know this in all clarity is to attain the Fruit of the Buddhist Path, perhaps even the final Fruit, Nibbāna, because this very knowledge is what destroys the defilements.

When we have come to know what is what or the true nature of what is what, disenchantment with *things* will take the place of fascination, and deliverance from suffering will come about automatically. At the moment we are living at a stage where we still do not know what things are really like; in particular, we do not yet realize that all things are impermanent (*anicca*) and empty of selfhood (*anattā*). We do not yet realize that all the things with which we become infatuated, desire, or rejoice over are impermanent, unsatisfactory,<sup>15</sup> and selfless. It is for this reason that we become infatuated with things, desire and rejoice over them, grasp and cling to them. When, by following the Buddhist method, we come to know things aright, to see clearly that they are all imperma-



nent, unsatisfactory, and without essentiality or selfless, that there is really nothing about things that might make it worth attaching ourselves to them, then a release from the controlling power of those things will come about.

Essentially the Buddha's teaching as we have it in the Tipiṭaka is nothing but the knowledge of what is what or the true nature of things. This teaching is summarized in a teaching called the Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth, which points out that all things are suffering, tells us precisely what things are like. Failing to realize that things are a source of suffering, we desire to acquire them. If we recognized them as a source of suffering not worth desiring, not worth grasping at and clinging to, we would be certain not to desire them. The Second Noble Truth points out that desire is the cause of suffering. People still do not understand that desire is the root cause of suffering. The Third Noble Truth points out that deliverance, freedom from suffering, Nibbāna, consists in the complete extinguishing of desire. People do not realize that Nibbāna is something to be attained at any time or place as soon as desire has been completely extinguished. Not knowing these truths, people are not interested in extinguishing desire. They are not interested in Nibbāna because they do not know what it is.

The Fourth Noble Truth is called the Path and constitutes the method for extinguishing desire. No one understands it as a method for extinguishing desire. None are interested in the desire-extinguishing Noble Eightfold Path. People do not recognize it as their very point of support or their foothold, something which they ought to be most actively reinforcing. They are not interested in the Buddha's Noble Path which happens to be the

most excellent and precious thing in the entire scope of human knowledge. Ignoring it is a most horrifying piece of ignorance.

In brief, the Four Noble Truths are information telling us clearly just what is what. We are told that if we play with desire, it will give rise to suffering, and yet we insist on toying with it until we are full of suffering. Such foolishness! Not really knowing what is what or the true nature of things, we act inappropriately in every way. Our actions are usually "appropriate" only in terms of the values of people subject to craving who would say that if one got what one wanted, the action must have been justified. Spiritually speaking, however, such action is unjustifiable.

Now we shall have a look at a stanza from the Buddhist texts which sums up the essence of Buddhism, namely, the words spoken by the bhikkhu Assaji when he met Sāriputta before the latter's ordination.<sup>16</sup> Sāriputta asked to be told the essence of Buddhism in as few words as possible. Assaji answered: "All phenomena that arise do so as a result of causes. The Perfected One has shown what the causes are, and also how all phenomena may be brought to an end by eliminating those causes. This is what the Great Master teaches." He said in effect that everything has causes that combine to produce it. The thing itself cannot be eliminated unless its causes have been eliminated first. Such a teaching warns us not to regard anything as a permanent self. Nothing is permanent. There are only effects arising out of causes, developing by virtue of causes, and due to cease with the cessation of those causes. All phenomena are merely products of causes. The world is a perpetual flux of natural forces incessantly interacting and changing. Buddhism points out

that all things are devoid of any self-essence. They represent only a perpetual flux of change which is inherently unsatisfactory because of the lack of freedom, the subjection to causality. This unsatisfactoriness will be brought to an end as soon as the process stops, and the process will stop as soon as the causes are eliminated, leading to no more interacting. This account of what is what or the nature of things is the heart of Buddhism. It tells us that because all things are just appearances, we should not be fooled into liking or disliking them. Rendering the mind truly free involves escaping completely from the causal chain by utterly eliminating causality. In this way the unsatisfactory condition that results from liking and disliking will be brought to an end.

Let us now examine the Buddha's intention in becoming an ascetic. What motivated him to become a bhikkhu? The reason is clearly indicated in one of his discourses, in which he says that he left home and became a bhikkhu in order to answer the question "What is the Good?" The word "good" (*kusala*) as used here by the Buddha refers to skillfulness in the sense of right knowledge. In particular he wanted to know what suffering is, what the cause of suffering is, what freedom from suffering is, and what the method is leading to freedom from suffering. To attain perfect and right knowledge is the ultimate in skill. The aim of Buddhism is nothing other than this perfection of knowledge of what is what or the true nature of things.

The nature of things is described by the Three Characteristics, namely, impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*), and nonselfhood (*anattā*). Not to know this teaching is not to know Buddhism. It points out that all things are impermanent

(*anicca*), all things are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and all things are not selves (*anattā*). By all things being impermanent we mean that all things change perpetually, there being no entity or self that remains unchanged for even an instant. That all things are unsatisfactory means that all things in themselves are conducive to suffering and torment. They are, consequently, inherently unlikable and disenchanting. That they are not selves is to say that in nothing whatsoever is there any entity which we might have a right to regard as its self or to call mine. If we grasp at things and cling to things the result is bound to be suffering. Things are more dangerous than fire. We can at least see a fire blazing away and so avoid getting too close to it, whereas all things are a fire we cannot see. Consequently we go about voluntarily picking up handfuls of fire, a painful experience, indeed.

In addition to knowing the nature of things we also have to know the right practice, in order to fit in with the nature of things. There is another teaching in the texts, known as the chief of all teachings. It consists of three brief points: "Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind!" This is the principle of the practice. Knowing all things as impermanent and worthless and, hence, not worth clinging to or becoming infatuated with, we must act appropriately and cautiously with respect to them and thereby avoid evil. On the one hand, we are not to break with accepted moral standards and we are to give up excessive craving and attachment. On the other, we are to do the higher good as this has come to be understood by wise people. These two points are simply stages in morality. The third, which tells us to make the mind completely pure of every kind of contaminating element, is the highest level of Buddhism. As long as the mind is not yet free

from domination by things, it cannot be clean and pure. Mental freedom must come from the most profound knowledge of what is what. As long as one lacks this knowledge, one is bound to go mindlessly liking or disliking things in one way or another. As long as one cannot remain unmoved by things, one can hardly be called free.

Basically, human beings are subject to two kinds of emotional state: liking and disliking, which correspond to pleasant and unpleasant mental feeling. We fall slaves to our moods and have no real freedom simply because we do not know the true nature of moods or what is what. Liking has the characteristic of seizing on things and taking them over; disliking has the characteristic of pushing things away and getting rid of them. As long as these two kinds of emotional state exist, the mind is not yet free. As long as it is still carelessly liking and disliking this, that, and the other, there is no way it can be purified and freed from the tyranny of things. For this very reason the highest teaching of Buddhism condemns grasping and clinging to things attractive and repulsive, ultimately condemning even attachment to good and evil. When the mind has been purified of these two emotional reactions, it will become independent of things.

Other religions would have us simply avoid evil and grasp at goodness. They have us grasp at and become attached to goodness, even including the epitome of goodness, that is, God himself. Buddhism goes much farther, condemning attachment to anything at all. Attachment to goodness is right practice at the intermediate level, but it just cannot take us to the highest level no matter what we do. At the lowest level we avoid evil; at the intermediate level we do our utmost to do good;

while at the highest level, we make the mind rest high above the domination of both good and evil. The condition of attachment to the fruits of goodness is not yet complete liberation from suffering, because, while an evil person suffers in a way befitting evil persons, a good person suffers also in a way befitting good persons. Being good, one experiences the kind of suffering appropriate to good human beings. A good celestial being experiences the suffering appropriate to celestial beings, and even a god experiences the suffering appropriate to gods. But complete freedom from all suffering will come only when one has broken free and transcended even that which we call goodness to become an *ariya*, one who has transcended the worldly condition, and to become, ultimately, a fully perfected individual, an *arahant*.

Buddhism is the teaching of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, and a Buddhist is one who practices according to the teaching of the Enlightened One. With regard to what was he enlightened? He simply knew the true nature of all things. Buddhism, then, is the teaching that tells us the truth about what things are really like or what is what. It is up to us to practice until we have come to know that truth for ourselves. We may be sure that once that perfect knowledge has been attained, craving will be completely destroyed by it, because ignorance will cease to be in the very same moment that knowledge arises. Every aspect of Buddhist practice is designed to bring knowledge. The whole purpose in setting the mind on the way of the practice that will penetrate to Buddha-Dhamma is simply to gain knowledge. Only it must be right knowledge, knowledge attained through clear insight, and not worldly knowledge or partial knowledge which clumsily mistakes bad for good and is a source of



suffering. See things in terms of suffering and so come to know the truth gradually, step by step. Knowledge so gained will be Buddhist knowledge, based on sound Buddhist principles.

Studying by this method, even an uneducated wood-cutter will be able to penetrate to the essence of Buddhism whereas a religious scholar with several degrees who is completely absorbed in studying the Tipiṭaka but does not look at things from this point of view may not penetrate the teaching at all. Those of us who have some intelligence should be capable of investigating and examining things and coming to know their true nature. Each thing we come across we must study in order to understand clearly its true nature. And we must understand the nature and the source of the suffering which it produces and which sets fire to us and scorches us. To establish mindfulness, to watch and wait, to examine the suffering that comes to one—this is the very best way to penetrate to Buddha-Dhamma. It is infinitely better than learning it from the Tipiṭaka. Busily studying Dhamma in the Tipiṭaka from the linguistic or literary viewpoint is no way to come to know the true nature of things. Of course the Tipiṭaka is full of explanations as to the nature of things, but people listen to it in the manner of parrots or talking myna birds, repeating later what they have been able to memorize. They themselves are incapable of penetrating to the true nature of things. If instead they would do some introspection and discover for themselves the properties of the mental defilements, of suffering, of nature, in other words, of all the things in which they are involved, they would then be able to penetrate to the real Buddha-Dhamma. Though a person may never have seen or even heard of the Tipiṭaka, if he

carries out a detailed investigation every time suffering arises and scorches his mind, he can be said to be studying the Tipiṭaka directly and far more correctly than people actually in the process of reading it. The latter may be just caressing the books of the Tipiṭaka every day without having any knowledge of the immortal Dhamma, the teaching contained within it.

We have ourselves, we make use of ourselves, we train ourselves, and we do things connected with ourselves every day without knowing anything about ourselves, without being able to handle adequately problems concerning ourselves. We are still subject to suffering, and craving is still present to produce more and more suffering every day as we grow older, simply because we do not know ourselves. To get to know the Tipiṭaka and the profound things hidden within it is most difficult. Let us, rather, set about studying Buddha-Dhamma by getting to know our own true nature. Let us get to know all the things that go to make up this very body and mind. Let us learn from this life spinning on in the cycle of desiring, acting on these desires, and the results of the actions nourishing the will to desire over and over again incessantly. We are obliged to go spinning on in the circle of *sarṁsāra*, that sea of suffering, purely and simply because of ignorance as to the true nature of things or what is what.

Summing up, Buddhism is an organized, practical system designed to reveal to us what is what. Once we have seen things as they really are we no longer need anyone to teach or guide us. We can carry on practicing by ourselves. One progresses along the Ariyan Path just as rapidly as one eliminates the defilements and gives up inappropriate action. Ultimately one will attain to the



best thing possible for a human being, namely, the Fruit of the Path, Nibbāna. This one can do by oneself simply by means of coming to know the ultimate sense of *what is what*.

### THE THREEFOLD TRAINING

The method to be used for eliminating clinging is based on three practical steps, namely, morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and insight (*paññā*)—known collectively as the threefold training. The first step is morality (*sīla*). Morality is simply suitable behavior, behavior that conforms with generally accepted standards and causes no distress to other people or to oneself. It is codified in the form of five, eight, ten, or 227 moral precepts,<sup>17</sup> or in other ways. It is conduct by way of body and speech aimed at peace and freedom from undesirable effects. It has to do with the members of a social group and the properties essential to living.

The second aspect of the threefold training is concentration (*samādhi*). It consists in constraining the mind to remain in the condition most conducive to success in whatever one wishes to achieve. No doubt most people have understood concentration as implying a completely tranquil mind, as steady and unmoving as a log of wood. But merely the two characteristics of being tranquil and steady are not the real meaning of concentration. The Buddha described the concentrated mind as “fit for work,” being in a suitable condition for doing one’s job. Fit for work is the best way to describe the properly concentrated mind.

The third aspect is training in insight or wisdom (*paññā*), the practice and drill that gives rise to the full

measure of right knowledge and understanding of the true nature of all things. Normally we are incapable of knowing anything in its true nature. We either stick to our own ideas or go along with popular opinion so that what we see is not the truth at all. It is for this reason that Buddhist practice includes training in insight, designed to give rise to full understanding into the true nature of things.

In the religious context, understanding or knowledge and insight or wisdom are not by any means the same. Understanding depends to some extent on the use of reasoning or rational intellection. Insight goes further than that. An object known by insight has been absorbed; it has been penetrated into and confronted face to face. The mind has become thoroughly absorbed in it through examination and investigation so sustained that there has arisen a nonrational but genuine and heartfelt disenchantment with that thing and a complete lack of emotional involvement in it. Consequently the Buddhist training in insight does not refer to intellectual understanding of the kind used in present-day academic and scholarly circles, where each individual can have his own particular kind of truth. Buddhist insight must be intuitive insight, clear and immediate, the result of having penetrated to the true nature of an object by one means or another, thereby making an indelible impression on the mind. For this reason the objects of scrutiny in insight-training must be things with which one comes into contact in the course of everyday living; only through continual application is the mind able to become genuinely detached from things as transient, unsatisfactory, and not-selves.

Evaluating the characteristics of transience, unsatisfactoriness, and nonselfhood only rationally, nothing re-

sults but intellectual understanding. There is no way such understanding can give rise to disillusionment and disenchantment with worldly things. When the condition of disenchantment replaces that of desiring an infatuatingly attractive object, this in itself constitutes insight. It is simply true that the presence of genuine, clear insight implies the presence of genuine detachment. It is impossible that the process should stop short at the point of clear insight. Detachment displaces desire for the object and is bound to arise immediately.

Training in morality is elementary preparatory practice which enables us to live happily and helps stabilize the mind. Morality yields various benefits, the most important being preparation of the way for concentration. Other advantages, such as conduciveness to happiness or to rebirth as a celestial being, were not considered by the Buddha to be the direct aims of morality. He regarded morality as primarily a means of inducing and developing concentration. As long as things continue to disturb the mind it can never become concentrated.

Training in concentration consists in developing the ability to control this mind of ours, to make use of it, to make it do its job to the best advantage. Morality is good behavior in respect to body and speech; concentration amounts to good behavior in respect to the mind and is the fruit of thorough mental training and discipline. The concentrated mind is devoid of all bad, defiling thoughts and does not wander off the object. It is in a fit condition to do its job.

Even in ordinary worldly situations concentration is a necessity. No matter what we are engaged in, we can hardly do it successfully unless the mind is focused. For this reason the Buddha counted concentration as one of

the marks of a great man. Regardless of whether a man is to be successful in worldly or in spiritual things, the faculty of concentration is absolutely indispensable. Take even a schoolboy. If he lacks concentration, how can he do arithmetic? The sort of concentration involved in doing arithmetic is natural concentration and is only poorly developed. Concentration as a basic element in Buddhist practice has been trained and raised to a higher pitch than can develop naturally. Consequently, when the mind has been trained successfully, it comes to have a great many very special abilities, powers, and attributes. A person who has managed to derive these benefits from concentration can be said to have moved up a step toward knowing the secrets of Nature. He knows how to control the mind and thus has abilities not possessed by the average person. The perfection of morality is an ordinary human ability. Even if someone makes a display of morality, it is never a superhuman effort. On the other hand, the attainment of deep concentration was classed by the Buddha as a superhuman ability of which the bhikkhus were never to make a display. Anyone who did show off this ability was considered no longer a good monk or no longer even a monk at all.

To attain concentration necessitates making sacrifices. We have to put up with varying degrees of hardship to train and practice until we have the degree of concentration appropriate to our abilities. Ultimately we shall gain much better results in our work than can the average man, simply because we have better tools at our disposal. Concentration is something of the greatest importance and worth making use of at all times, especially nowadays when the world seems to be spinning too fast and on the point of going up in flames. There is far more

need for concentration now than there was in the time of the Buddha. It is not just something for the people in temples or for eccentrics.

Now we come to the connection between the training in concentration and the training in insight. The Buddha once said that when the mind is concentrated it is in a position to see all things as they really are. When the mind is concentrated and fit for work it will know all things in their true nature. It is a strange thing that the answer to any problem that a person is trying to solve is usually already present, though concealed, in his very own mind. He is not aware of it because it is still only subconscious, and as long as he is set on solving the problem, the solution will not come simply because his mind at that time is not in a fit condition for solving problems. If, when setting about any mental task, a person develops right concentration, that is, if he renders his mind fit for work, the solution to his problem will come to light of its own accord. The moment the mind has become concentrated, the answers will just fall into place. But should the solution still fail to come, there exists another method for directing the mind to the examination of the problems, namely, the practice of concentrated introspection, referred to as the training in insight.

On the day of his enlightenment the Buddha attained insight into the Law of Conditioned Origination. That is, he came to perceive the true nature of things, or what is what, and the sequence in which they arise. He attained this knowledge as a result of being concentrated in the way we have just described. The Buddha has related the story in detail, but essentially it amounts to this: As soon as his mind was well concentrated it was in a position to examine the problem. It is just when the mind is quiet



and cool, in a state of well-being, undisturbed, well concentrated, and fresh, that some solution to a persistent problem is arrived at. Insight is always dependent on concentration, although we may perhaps never have noticed the fact. Actually the Buddha demonstrated an association between concentration and insight even more intimate than this. He pointed out that concentration is indispensable for insight, and insight indispensable for concentration. To produce concentration at a higher intensity than occurs naturally requires the presence of understanding of certain characteristics of the mind. One must know in just which way the mind has to be controlled in order to induce concentration. The more insight a person has, therefore, the higher the degree of concentration of which he will be capable. Likewise an increase in concentration results in a corresponding increase in insight. Either one of the two factors promotes the other.

Insight implies unobscured vision and, consequently, detachment and equanimity. It results in a backing away from all the things with which one had formerly been madly infatuated. If one has insight, yet still goes rushing after things, madly craving them, grasping at and clinging to them, then it cannot be insight in the Buddhist sense. Stopping short and backing away is, of course, not a physical action. One does not have to go off to live in the forest. Here we are referring specifically to a mental stopping short and backing away, as a result of which the mind ceases to be a slave to things and becomes free. This is what it is like when desire for things has given way to disenchantment. It is not a matter of committing suicide or going off to live as a hermit or destroying everything. Outwardly one is as usual, behaving quite

normally with respect to things. Inwardly, however, there is a difference. The mind is independent and free, no longer a slave to things. This is the virtue of insight. The Buddha called this effect deliverance, escape from slavery to things, in particular, to the things we like. Actually we are enslaved by the things we dislike too. We are enslaved insofar as we cannot help disliking them and are unable to remain unmoved by them. In disliking things, we are being active; we become emotional about them. They manage to control us just as do the things we like, affecting each of us in a different way. The expression "slavery to things," therefore, refers to the reactions of liking and disliking.

The Buddha summed up the insight principle very briefly by saying, "Insight is the means by which we can purify ourselves." He did not specify morality or concentration as the means by which we could purify ourselves, but insight, which enables us to escape and liberates us from things. Not freed from things, one is impure, tainted, infatuated, passionate. Once free, one is pure, spotless, enlightened, tranquil. This is the fruit of insight, the condition that results when insight has done its job completely. Buddhist insight is insight that results in backing away from things, by completely destroying the four kinds of attachment.<sup>18</sup> Those four attachments are ropes holding us fast; insight is the knife that can cut those bonds and set us free. With the four attachments gone, there is nothing left to bind us fast to things.

Will these three modes of practice stand the test? Are they soundly based and suitable for all in practice? When we have another look at them we see that these three factors do not conflict with any religious doctrine at all, assuming that the religion in question really aims at rem-

edying the problem of human suffering. The Buddhist teaching does not conflict with any other religion; yet it has some things that no other religion has. In particular, it has the practice of insight, the superlative technique for eliminating the four attachments. It liberates the mind, rendering it independent and incapable of becoming bound, enslaved, or overpowered by anything whatsoever, including God in heaven, spirits, or celestial beings. No other religion is prepared to let the individual free himself completely or be entirely self-reliant. We must be fully aware of this principle of self-reliance, a key feature of Buddhism.

As soon as we see that Buddhism has everything that any other religion has and also several things that none of them has, we realize that Buddhism is for everyone. Buddhism is the universal religion. It can be put into practice by any in every age and era. People everywhere have the same problem: to free themselves from suffering, suffering which is inherent in birth, aging, pain, and death, suffering which stems from desire and grasping. Everyone without exception—celestial being, human being, or beast—has this same problem, and everyone has the same job to do, namely, to eliminate completely the desire and unskillful grasping at the root of suffering. Buddhism offers a way out of this universal dilemma.

### THE THINGS WE CLING TO

To what do we cling? What is our handhold? What we cling to is the world itself. In Buddhism the word "world" has a broader connotation than it has in ordinary usage. It refers to the totality of all things. It does not refer just to human beings, celestial beings, demons,



or any particular realm of existence. What the term "world" refers to here is the whole lot taken together. To know the world is difficult because certain levels of the world are concealed. Most of us are familiar with only the outermost layer or level, the level of relative truth, the level corresponding to the intellect of the average man. For this reason Buddhism teaches us about the world at various levels.

The Buddha's method of instruction was based on a division of the world into a material or physical aspect and a nonmaterial or mental aspect. He further divided the mental world or mind into four parts. The physical and the mental together make a total of five components, called by the Buddha the five aggregates which make up the world of living creatures and man himself. In man these five components are all present together. His physical body is the material aggregate, and his mental aspect is divisible into four aggregates which we shall now describe.

The first of the mental aggregates is feeling (*vedanā*), which is of three kinds: pleasure or gratification, displeasure or suffering, and a neutral kind which is neither pleasure nor displeasure but a kind of feeling nevertheless. Under normal conditions feelings are always present in us. The Buddha simply pointed to these feelings as one of the components that go to make up man.

The second component of mind is consciousness (*saññā*). This is the process of becoming aware similar to waking up, as opposed to being sound asleep, unconscious, or dead. It refers to memory as well as awareness of sense impressions, covering both the primary sensation resulting from contact with an object by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body and the recall of previous impres-

sions. Thus, one may be directly aware of an object as black or white, long or short, man or beast, or one may be similarly aware in retrospect by way of memory.

The third mental aggregate is the actively thinking component (*sankhāra*) in an individual. Thinking of doing something, thinking of saying something, good thought and bad thought, willed thinking, active thinking—this is the third mental aggregate.

The fourth component of mind is knowing (*viññāṇa*). It is the function of knowing the objects perceived by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the general body sense, and also by way of the mind itself.

These five aggregates are the object and handhold for our grasping and clinging. A person may grasp at any one of these groups as being a self according to the extent of his ignorance. For instance, a boy who carelessly bumps into a door and hurts himself feels he has to give the door a kick in order to relieve his anger and pain. In other words, he is grasping at a purely material object, the door, which is nothing but wood, as being an agent. This is attachment at the very lowest level. A man who becomes angry with his body to the point of striking it or hitting himself on the head is grasping and clinging in the same way. He is taking those body-parts to be independent entities. If he is more intelligent than that, he may seize on feeling, consciousness, active thinking, or knowing as having a self-reality. If he is unable to distinguish them individually, he may grasp at the whole lot collectively as being a self, that is, take all five groups together to be his self.

After the physical body, the group most likely to be clung to as being a self is feeling that is qualified as pleasurable, painful, or neutral. Let us consider the situation

in which we find ourselves entranced with sensual pleasures, caught up heart and soul in the various colors and shapes, sounds, scents, tastes, and tactual objects we perceive. Here, feeling is the pleasure and delight experienced, and it is to that very feeling of pleasure and delight that we cling. Almost everyone clings to feeling as having a self-reality, because there is no one who does not like delightful sensations. Ignorance or delusion blinds a person to all else. He sees only the delightful object and grasps at it as being a reality he can make "mine."

Feeling, whether of pleasure or displeasure, is truly a site of suffering. Spiritually speaking, these feelings of pleasure and displeasure may be considered as synonymous with suffering because they give rise to nothing but mental torment. Pleasure renders the mind buoyant; displeasure deflates it. Gain and loss, happiness and sorrow, amount in effect to mental restlessness or instability. They set the mind spinning. This is what is meant by grasping at feeling as having a self-reality. Understanding feeling as an object of clinging, the mind will be rendered independent of it. Feeling normally has control over the mind, luring us into situations that we regret later on. In his practical path to perfection or sainthood, the Buddha teaches us repeatedly to give particular attention to the examination of feeling. Many have become saints (*arahant-s*), broken free from suffering by means of restricting feeling to simply an object of study.

Feeling is more likely than any of the other aggregates to serve as a handhold for us to cling to, because feeling is the primary objective of all our striving and activity. We study industriously and work at our jobs in order to get money. Then we go and buy things—utensils, food,

amusements—covering the whole range from gastronomy to sex. Afterward we partake of these things with one single objective, namely, pleasurable feeling, delightful stimulation of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. We invest all our resources, monetary, physical, and mental, simply in the expectation of pleasurable feeling. Everyone knows well enough in his own mind that if it were not for the lure of pleasurable feeling he would never invest study and work and physical energy in the search for money. We can see, then, that feeling is no small matter. A knowledge and understanding of it puts us in a position to keep it under control, makes us sufficiently high-minded to remain above feelings, and enables us to carry out all our activities far better than we otherwise could.

Even the problems that arise in a social group have their origins in the desire to satisfy feeling. When we analyze closely the clashes between nations or between opposing blocs, we discover that there, too, both sides are slaves to their feeling. A war is not fought simply because of adherence to a doctrine or an ideal or anything of the sort. In point of fact the motivation is the satisfaction of the feelings of hatred, fear, and so on. Each side sees itself making all sorts of gains, scooping up benefits for itself. Such a doctrine is just camouflage or, at best, a purely secondary motive. The most deep-seated cause of all strife is really subservience to feeling. To understand feeling is, then, to know an important root cause responsible for our falling slaves to the mental defilements, to evil, and to suffering.

Consciousness, too, can easily be seized on as having a self-reality or as one's self. The average villager likes to say that when we fall asleep, something that he calls

the soul departs from the body. The body is, then, like a log of wood, receiving no sensation by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body. As soon as that something has returned to the body, awareness and wakefulness are restored. A great many people have this naïve belief that consciousness is the self. But, as the Buddha taught, consciousness is not a self in this sense. Consciousness is simply sensation and memory, that is, knowing, and is bound to be present as long as the body continues to function normally. As soon as the bodily functions become disrupted, the thing we call consciousness changes or ceases to function. For this reason true Buddhists refuse to accept consciousness as a self, even though the average person does accept it as such, clinging to it as "myself." Close examination along Buddhist lines reveals that quite the opposite is the case. Consciousness is nobody's self at all. It is simply a result of natural processes and nothing more.

The next possible point of attachment is active thinking, intending to do this or that, intending to get this or that, mental action good or bad. Everyone feels that if anything is to be identified as a self, then it is more likely to be the thinking element than any other. For instance, one philosopher in recent centuries had a naïve philosophy in which he proclaimed, "I think, therefore I am." Even philosophers in this scientific age have similar ideas about the self, maintaining that the thinking element is the self. They regard as the self that which they understand to be "the thinker." We have said that the Buddha rejected both feeling and consciousness as a self-reality. He also rejected the thinking aspect of the mind as a self because the activity manifesting itself as thought is a purely natural event. Thought arises as a result of the in-

teraction of a variety of prior events. It is just one of the assorted components that make up the individual, and no "I" or self entity is involved. Hence we maintain that this thinking component is devoid of selfhood just as are the other aggregates we have mentioned.

The difficulty in understanding this truth lies in our inadequate knowledge of the mental element or mind. We are familiar only with the body, the material element, and know almost nothing about the other, the mental, non-material element. As a result we have difficulty understanding it. Here it can only be said that the Buddha saw the individual as a combination of five aggregates, physical and mental. Now when the event we call thinking takes place, we jump to the conclusion that there is "someone" there who is "the thinker." We believe there is a thinker or an agent-soul which is master of the body. But the Buddha completely rejected such entities. When we analyze the individual as five aggregates, there is nothing left over, proving that man consists of just these components and that there is nothing we might consider as his self.

The last group, knowing (*viññāṇa*), is simply the function of becoming fully aware of objects perceived by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. It has no self-reality either. The organs simply take in the colors and shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactual objects that impinge on them, and, as a result, knowledge of those objects arises in three stages. In the case of the eye there arises clear knowledge of the shape of the visual object, whether it is man or beast, long or short, black or white. The arising of clear knowledge in this way is a mechanical process which happens of its own accord automatically. There are some who maintain that this is the soul or the spirit which

moves into and out of the mind and receives stimuli by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Buddhists recognize it simply as nature. If a visual object and an eye, together with optic nerve, make contact, seeing will take place and there will arise visual knowledge. Once again there is no need for any self whatsoever.

When we have analyzed the "being" into its components—body, feeling, consciousness, thinking, and knowing—we find no part which might be a self or belong to a self. Thus we can completely reject the self idea as false and conclude that nobody is or has a self. When one ceases to cling to things, no longer liking or disliking them, this indicates one has perceived that those things have no self-reality. Rational thinking is sufficient to convince one they cannot be selves, but the result is only belief, not clear insight of the sort that can completely cut out clinging to them as selves. For this very reason we have to study and examine the five aggregates on the basis of the threefold training in order to develop sufficient insight to be able to give up clinging to the self idea. This practice with respect to the five aggregates serves to produce clear insight and eliminate ignorance. When we have completely eliminated ignorance, we shall be able to see for ourselves that none of the aggregates is a self, none is worth clinging to. All clinging, even the kind that has existed since birth, will then cease completely.

It is essential, then, that we study thoroughly the five aggregates which are the objects of the self conceit. The Buddha stressed this aspect of his teaching more than any other. It may be summed up very briefly by saying, "None of the five aggregates is a self." This truth should be considered a key point in Buddhism whether one looks

at it as philosophy, as science, or as religion. When we *know* this truth, ignorance-based grasping and clinging vanish, desire of any sort has no means of arising, and suffering ceases.

Why is it then that we normally do not see the five aggregates as they really are? When we were born we had no understanding of things. We acquired knowledge on the basis of what people taught us. The way they taught us led us to understand that all things have a self-reality. The power of the primal, instinctive belief in selfhood present from birth becomes very strong in the course of time. In speaking, we use the words "I, you, he, she," which only serve to reinforce the self idea. We say: "This is Mr. X; that is Mr. Y. He is Mr. A's son and Mr. B's grandson. This is so-and-so's husband; that is so-and-so's wife" This way of speaking serves to identify people as selves. Consequently none of us are conscious of clinging to the notion of selfhood. When we cling to something as being a self, however, the result is selfishness and our actions are biased accordingly. If we were to develop sufficient insight to see the deception in this idea, we would stop clinging to the self implications of Mr. A, Mr. B, high class, low class, beast, human being, and would see these terms as nothing more than words that man has devised for use in social intercourse. When we have come to understand this fact, we can be said to have dispensed with an important means of deception. When we examine the whole of what goes to make up Mr. A, we find that Mr. A is simply an aggregation of body, feeling, consciousness, thinking, and knowing. With this realization we shall no longer be deluded by worldly relative truth.

It is possible to carry the process of analysis further. For instance, the physical body can be divided up rather



crudely into the elements of earth, water, wind, and fire, or it can be analyzed scientifically into carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and so on. The deeper we look, the less we are deceived. Penetrating below the surface, we find that in fact there is no person; there are only elements, physical and mental. Looked at in this light, the "person" disappears. The self notion of Mr. A, Mr. B, high class, or low class dissolves. The idea of my child, my husband, my wife vanishes. When we look at things in the light of absolute truth we find only elements—earth, water, wind, and fire; oxygen, hydrogen, and so on; body, feeling, consciousness, thinking, and knowing. On examining these closely we find they all have one property in common, namely, emptiness. Each is empty of what we refer to as its self. Earth, water, wind, and fire looked at properly are seen to be empty of selfhood. It is possible for each one of us to see anything and everything as empty in this sense. This done, grasping and clinging will have no means of arising. They will dissolve, pass away, vanish entirely without a trace remaining.

There are no animals, no people, no elements, no aggregates. There are no things at all; there is only emptiness, emptiness of selfhood. When we do not grasp and cling, there is no way suffering can arise. One who sees all things as empty is quite unmoved when people call him good or bad, unhappy or miserable, or anything. The fruit of knowledge, understanding and clear insight into the true nature of the five aggregates, makes it possible to give up completely all kinds of unskillful clinging.

To sum up, everything in the whole world is included within the five aggregates—matter, feeling, consciousness, thinking, and knowing. Each of these groups is a decep-

tion; each is quite devoid of selfhood but has the seductive power to induce grasping and clinging. As a result, the ordinary person desires to possess, desires to be, desires not to possess, desires not to be, all of which only serves to produce suffering, suffering which is not obvious but concealed. It behooves everyone to utilize the three-fold training in morality, concentration, and insight to eliminate delusion with respect to the five aggregates. A person who has followed this path will not fall under the power of the five aggregates and will be free of suffering. For him, life will be unblemished bliss, and his mind will be free from attachment to all things for as long as he lives.

### INSIGHT, BY THE NATURE METHOD

In this section and the next we shall see how concentration may come about, naturally on the one hand and as a result of organized practice on the other. The end result is identical in the two cases: the mind is concentrated and fit to be used for carrying out close introspection. One thing must be noticed, however. The intensity of concentration that comes about naturally is usually sufficient and appropriate for introspection and insight, whereas the concentration resulting from organized training is usually excessive, more than can be made use of. Furthermore, misguided satisfaction with that highly developed concentration may result. While the mind is fully concentrated it is likely to experience such a satisfying kind of bliss and well-being that the meditator may become attached to it or imagine it to be the fruit of the path. Naturally occurring concentration which is sufficient

and suitable for use in introspection is harmless, having none of the disadvantages inherent in concentration developed by means of intensive training.

In the Tipiṭaka there are numerous references to people attaining naturally all stages of path and fruit. This generally came about in the presence of the Buddha himself but also happened later with other teachers. These people did not go into the forest and sit, assiduously practicing concentration on certain objects in the way described in later manuals. No organized effort was involved when *arahant*-ship was attained by the first five disciples of the Buddha on hearing the Discourse on Non-selfhood or by the one thousand hermits on hearing the Fire Sermon.<sup>19</sup> In these cases keen, penetrating insight came about quite naturally. These examples clearly show that natural concentration is liable to develop of its own accord while one is attempting to understand clearly some question, and that the resulting insight, as long as it is firmly established, must be quite intense and stable. It happens naturally, automatically, in just the same way that the mind becomes concentrated the moment we set about doing arithmetic. Likewise in firing a gun, when we take aim the mind automatically becomes concentrated and steady. We normally overlook naturally occurring concentration completely, because it does not appear the least bit magical, miraculous, or awe-inspiring. But through the power of just such concentration, most of us could actually attain liberation. We could attain the Fruit of the Path, Nibbāna and *arahant*-ship, just by means of natural concentration. It is something most of us either already have or can readily develop. We have to do everything we can to cultivate it, to make it function perfectly and yield the appropriate results, just as did most of the

people who succeeded in becoming saints, none of whom knew anything of modern concentration techniques.

Now let us look at the nature of the stages of inner awareness leading to full insight into the world, that is, into the five aggregates. The first stage is joy (*pīti*), mental happiness, or spiritual well-being. Doing good in some way, even giving alms, considered the most basic form of merit-making, can be a source of joy. Higher up at the level of morality, complete blameless conduct by way of word and action brings an increase in joy. We also discover that there is a definite kind of delight associated with the lower stages of concentration.

This rapture has in itself the power to induce tranquillity. Normally the mind is quite unrestrained, continually falling slave to all sorts of thoughts and feelings associated with enticing things outside. It is normally restless, not calm. But as spiritual joy becomes established, calm and steadiness are bound to increase in proportion. When steadiness has been perfected, the result is full concentration. The mind becomes tranquil, steady, flexible, manageable, and at ease, ready to be used for any desired purpose, in particular for the elimination of the defilements.

It is not a case of the mind's being rendered silent, hard, and rocklike. Nothing like that happens at all. The body feels normal, but the mind is especially calm and suitable for use in thinking and introspection. It is perfectly clear, perfectly cool, perfectly still and restrained. In other words it is fit for work, ready to know. This is the degree of concentration to be aimed for, not the very deep concentration where one sits rigidly like a stone image, quite devoid of awareness. Sitting in such deep concentration, one is in no position to investigate

anything. A deeply concentrated mind cannot practice introspection at all. It is in a state of unawareness and is of no use for insight. *Deep concentration is a major obstacle to insight practice.* To practice introspection one must first return to the shallower levels of concentration, then one can make use of the power the mind has acquired. Highly trained concentration is just a tool. In this development of insight by the nature method we do not have to attain deep concentration and sit with the body rigid. Rather, we aim at a calm, steady mind, one so fit for work that when applied to insight practice it gains right understanding with regard to the entire world. Insight so developed is natural insight, the same sort gained by some individuals while sitting listening to the Buddha expounding Dhamma. It is conducive to thought and introspection of the right kind, the kind that brings understanding, and it involves neither ceremonial procedures nor miracles.

This does not mean, however, that insight will arise instantaneously. One cannot be an *arahant* automatically. The first step in knowledge may come about at any time, depending once again on the intensity of the concentration. It may happen that what arises is not true insight because one has been practicing incorrectly or has been surrounded by too many false views. But however it turns out, the insight that does arise is bound to be extraordinarily clear and profound. If the knowledge gained is right knowledge corresponding with reality or Dhamma, then it will progress, developing ultimately into right and true knowledge of all phenomena. If insight develops in only small measure, it may convert a person into an *ariya* at the lowest stage, or, if it is not sufficient to do

that, it will just make him a high-minded individual, an ordinary person of good qualities. If the environment is suitable and good qualities have been properly and adequately established, it is possible to become an *arahant*. However far things go, as long as the mind has natural concentration, this factor called insight is bound to arise, corresponding more or less closely with reality. Because we, being Buddhists, have thought about and studied the world, the five aggregates, material and non-material phenomena, in the hope of coming to understand the true nature of things, it follows that the knowledge we acquire while in a calm and concentrated state will not be in any way misleading. It is bound to be always beneficial.

The expression "insight into the true nature of things" refers to realizing transience, unsatisfactoriness, and nonselfhood, seeing that nothing is worth getting, nothing is worth being, seeing that no object whatsoever should be grasped at and clung to as being a self or as belonging to a self, as being good or bad, attractive or repulsive. Liking or disliking anything, even if it is only an idea or a memory, is clinging. To say that nothing is worth getting or being is the same as to say that nothing is worth clinging to. "Getting" refers to setting one's heart on property, position, wealth, or any pleasing object. "Being" refers to the awareness of one's status as husband, wife, rich man, poor man, winner, loser, or even the awareness of being oneself. If we really look deeply, even being oneself is tedious and wearisome because it is a source of suffering. If one can completely give up clinging to the idea of being oneself, then being oneself will no longer be suffering. This is what it means to see the worthlessness of

being anything and is the gist of the statement that being anything is bound to be suffering in a way appropriate to that particular state of being.

Any state of being, if it is to continue as such, has to be made to last, to endure. At the very least it must endure in one's mind in the form of a belief in that particular state of being. When there exists "oneself," there necessarily exist things other than that self belonging to it. Thus one has one's children, one's wife, one's this, that, and the other. Then one has a duty as husband or wife, master or servant, and so on. Consequently there is no state of being such that to maintain it will not involve struggle. The trouble and struggle necessary to maintain one's state of being are simply the result of blind infatuation with things.

If we were to give up trying to get or to be anything, how could we continue to exist? The words "getting" and "being" as used here refer to getting and being based on mental defilements, craving, the idea of "worth getting," "worth being," so that the mind does get and be in real earnest. These factors lead to depression, anxiety, distress, and upset, or at least a heavy burden on the mind from beginning to end. Knowing this truth we shall be constantly on the alert, keeping watch over the mind to see that it does not fall slave to getting and being through the influence of grasping and clinging. Aware that, in reality, things are not worth getting or being, we shall be smart enough to stay aloof from them.

If, however, we are not yet in a position to withdraw completely from having and being, we must be mindful and wide awake, so that when we do get or become something we do so without emotional upset. We must not be like those people who, turning a blind eye and a

deaf ear, go ahead brainlessly and inexpertly getting or becoming, with the result that they fall into the pit of their own stupidity and attachment, ending up having to commit suicide.

The world and all things have the property of impermanence, of worthlessness, and of not belonging to anyone. Any individual who grasps and clings to anything will be hurt by it. All the time—before, during, and after—when a man grasps and clings with deaf ear and blind eye he will receive his full measure of suffering, just as can be seen happening to all deluded worldlings. It is the same even with goodness which everyone values highly. If anyone becomes involved with goodness, clinging to it too much, he will derive just as much suffering from goodness as he would from evil. In becoming involved with goodness we have to bear in mind that it possesses the properties of all worldly things.

A skeptic may ask, "If nothing at all is worth getting or being, does it follow that nobody ought to do any work or build up wealth, position, and property?" Anyone who comprehends this subject can see that a person equipped with right knowledge and understanding is actually in a far better position to carry out any task than one subject to strong desires and lacking in understanding. Very briefly, in becoming involved in things, we must do so mindfully, and our actions must not be motivated by craving.

The Buddha and all the other *arahant*-s were completely free of desire; yet they succeeded in doing many things far more useful than what any of us are capable of. If we look at accounts of how the Buddha spent his day, we find that he slept for only four hours and spent the rest of the time working. We spend more than four hours



a day just amusing ourselves. If the defilements responsible for the desire to be and get things had been completely eliminated, what was the force that motivated the Buddha and all *arahant*-s to act? They were motivated by discrimination coupled with goodwill (*mettā*). Even actions based on natural bodily wants such as receiving and eating alms food were motivated by discrimination. They were free of defilements, free of all desire to keep on living in order to be this or to get that. They had the ability to discriminate between what was worthwhile and what was not as the motivating force in all that they did. If they found food, well and good. If not, it made no difference. When they were suffering with fever they knew how to treat it and did so as well as possible on the basis of this knowledge. If the fever was quite overpowering, they recalled that to die is natural. Whether they lived or died was of no significance to them. The two were of equal value in their eyes.

If one is to be completely free of suffering, this is the best attitude to have. There need not be any self as master of the body. Discrimination alone enables the body to carry on by its natural power. The example of the Buddha shows that the power of pure discrimination and pure goodwill alone is sufficient to keep an *arahant* living in the world and, what is more, doing far more good to others than people still subject to craving. Defiled people are likely to do only what benefits themselves since they act out of selfishness. By contrast, the deeds of saints are entirely selfless and so are perfectly pure. In desiring to get and be, one is acting quite inappropriately; one is mistaking evil for good, not knowing what is what. Let us all, then, go about things intelligently, always bearing in

mind that in reality nothing is worth getting or being, nothing is worth becoming infatuated with, nothing is worth clinging to. Let us act in a manner in keeping with the knowledge that things are by their very nature not worth getting or being. If we have to become involved in things, let us go about it in the right way, acting appropriately. In this manner the mind is always pure, unobscured, tranquil, and cool. It allows us to become involved in the world, in things, without doing ourselves any harm in the process.

When the ordinary worldly man hears that nothing is worth getting or being, he does not believe it. Anyone, however, who understands the real meaning of this statement becomes emboldened and cheered by it. His mind becomes master of things and thereby independent of them. He becomes capable of going after things, sure in the knowledge that he will not become enslaved by them. His actions are not motivated by desire, and he is not blinded with passion so that he becomes a slave to things. In getting anything or being anything, let us always be aware that we are getting or being something which, in terms of absolute truth, we cannot get or be at all because there is nothing that we can really get or be as we might wish. All things are transient and unsatisfactory and can never belong to us; yet we go foolishly ahead, grasping at them and craving for them. In other words we act inappropriately or in a way not according with the true nature of things. The result is bound to be all manner of suffering and trouble. The reason a person is incapable of doing his job faultlessly is that he is always far too concerned with getting something and being something, always motivated by his own desires. As a result he is not

master of himself and cannot be consistently good, honest, and fair. In every case of failure and ruin the root cause is slavery to desire.

To come to know the true nature of things is the objective of every Buddhist. It is the means by which we can liberate ourselves. Regardless of whether we are hoping for worldly benefits, wealth, position, and fame, or for benefits in the next world such as heaven, or for the supramundane benefit, the Fruit of the Path or Nibbāna—whatever we are hoping for—the only way to achieve it is by means of right knowledge and insight. In the Pāli texts it is said that we become purified through insight and not by any other means. Our path to freedom lies in having the insight, the clear vision, that in all things there neither is nor has ever been anything at all worth grasping at or clinging to, worth getting or being, worth risking life and limb for. We have things and are things only in terms of worldly, relative truth.

In worldly language we say we are this or that, just because in any society it is expedient to recognize by names and occupations. But we must not believe that we really are this or that, as is assumed at the level of relative truth. To do so is to behave like the crickets, which, when their faces become covered with dirt, become disoriented and muddled and proceed to bite one another until they die. We humans, when our faces become covered in dirt, when we are subject to all sorts of delusions, become so bewildered and disoriented that we do things no human being could ever do under ordinary circumstances—killing, for instance. So let us not go blindly clinging to relative truths; rather, let us be aware that they are just relative truths, essential in a society but nothing more. We have to be aware of what this body-and-mind really

is, what its true nature is. In particular we have to be aware of its impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-selfhood, and make sure we always remain independent of it.

As for the wealth and position that we cannot do without, let us regard these too as relative truths, so that we can break free from the existing custom of saying, for instance, "This belongs to so-and-so" or "That belongs to such-and-such." The law watches over ownership rights for us; there is no need for us to cling to the idea of "mine." We ought to possess things purely and simply for the sake of convenience and ease and not so they can be master over our minds. When we have this clear knowledge, things will become our servants and we shall remain on top of them. If our thoughts go the way of craving and attachment, so that we become conscious of having and being, clinging firmly to these ideas, things will get on top of us and we shall be their servants and under their control. We have to arrange things in such a way that we are sure of staying independent and on top of things. Otherwise we may find ourselves in a most pitiable position.

When we have really come to perceive clearly that nothing is worth getting or being, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) develops in proportion to the intensity of the insight. It is a sign that the clinging has become less firm and is starting to give way. It is a sign that we have been slaves for so long that the idea of trying to escape has at last occurred to us. This is the onset of disenchantment and disillusionment, when one becomes fed up with one's own stupidity in grasping and clinging to things, believing things to be worth having and being. As soon as disenchantment has set in, there is bound to come about a

natural, automatic process of disentanglement (*virāga*), as if a rope with which one had been tightly bound were being untied, or a rinsing out, as when the dye that had been firmly fixed in a piece of cloth is removed by soaking it in the appropriate substances. This process whereby clinging gives way to a breaking free or a dissolving out from the world or from the objects of that clinging, was called by the Buddha emancipation (*vimutta*). This stage is most important. Though not the final stage, it is an essential step toward complete liberation. When one has broken free to this extent, complete liberation from suffering is assured.

Once broken free from slavery, one need never again be a slave to the world. One becomes pure and uncontaminated where previously one was defiled in every way. To be enslaved to things is to be defiled in body, speech, and thought. To break free from slavery to the delightful tastes of the world is to achieve the pure condition and never be defiled again. This real purity (*visuddhi*), once it has been attained, will give rise to a genuine calm and coolness free from all turbulence, strife, and torment. This state of freedom from oppression and turbulence was called by the Buddha simply peace (*santi*), that is, stillness, coolness in all situations, which is virtually the same thing as Nibbāna.

“Nibbāna” has been translated as “absence of any instrument of torture.” Taken another way, it means “extinction without remainder.” So the word “Nibbāna” has two very important meanings: first, absence of any source of torment and burning, freedom from all forms of bondage and constraint; and second, extinction, with no fuel for the further arising of suffering. The combination of these meanings indicates a condition of complete

freedom from suffering. There are several other useful meanings for the word "Nibbāna." It can be taken to mean the extinction of suffering or the complete elimination of defilements, the state of coolness or the condition that is the cessation of all suffering, all defilements, and all karmic activity. Though the word "Nibbāna" is used by different sects, the sense in which they use it is often not the same at all. For instance, one group takes it to mean simply calm and coolness, because they identify Nibbāna with deep concentration. Other groups even consider total absorption in sensuality as Nibbāna.

The Buddha defined Nibbāna as simply that condition of freedom from bondage, torment, and suffering which results from seeing the true nature of the worldly condition and all things, and so being able to give up clinging to them. It is essential, then, that we recognize the great value of insight into the true nature of things and endeavor to cultivate this insight by one means or another. Using one method we simply encourage it to come about of its own accord, naturally, by developing day and night the joy that results from mental purity, until the qualities we have described gradually evolve. The other method consists in developing mental power by following an organized system of concentration and insight practice. This latter technique is appropriate for people with a certain kind of disposition who may make rapid progress with it if conditions are right. But we can practice the development of insight by the nature method in all circumstances and at all times—just by making our own way of daily living so pure and honest that there arise in succession spiritual joy, calm, insight into the true nature of things, disenchantment, withdrawal, escape, purification from defilements, and then peace or Nibbāna.

Summing up, natural concentration and insight, which enable a person to attain the Path and the Fruit, consist in verifying every day the truth of the statement that nothing is worth getting or being. Anyone who wishes to get this result must strive to purify himself and to develop exemplary personal qualities, so that he can find perpetual spiritual joy in work and leisure. That very joy induces clarity and freshness, mental calm and stillness, and serves, naturally and automatically, to give the mind ability to think and introspect. With the insight that nothing is worth getting or being constantly present, the mind loses all desire for the things it once used to grasp at and cling to. It is able to break free from the things it used to regard as "me" and "mine," and all blind craving for things ceases. Suffering, which no longer has anywhere to lodge, dwindles away, and the job of eliminating suffering is finished. This is the reward, and it can be gained by any one of us.

### INSIGHT, BY ORGANIZED TRAINING

Now we shall deal with the organized systems of insight training which were not taught by the Buddha but were developed by later teachers. This kind of practice is suitable for people at a fairly undeveloped stage who still cannot perceive the unsatisfactoriness of worldly existence, naturally, with their own eyes. This does not mean, however, that the results obtained by these systems have any special qualities not obtainable by the nature method. Some people consider that natural insight can be developed only by someone who has become so remarkably virtuous, or has such a suitable disposition, that for him to come to a full understanding of things is just child's

play. What is a person to do who lacks transcendent virtues and the appropriate disposition? For such people, teachers laid down ordered systems of practice, concise courses which start from scratch and have to be followed through thoroughly and systematically.

These systems of practice for developing insight are now known by the technical term *vipassanā-dhura*. Insight development is contrasted with study (*gantha-dhura*), the two being considered nowadays complementary aspects of training. *Vipassanā-dhura* is study done within. It is strictly mental training, having nothing to do with textbooks. Neither the term "study" (*gantha-dhura*) nor *vipassanā-dhura* is mentioned in the Tipiṭaka, both appearing only in later books; but *vipassanā-dhura* is, nevertheless, a genuine Buddhist practice, designed for people intent on eliminating suffering. It is based directly on sustained, concentrated introspection. In order to explain *vipassanā* to people, teachers in former ages considered it in terms of the following questions:

What is the basis, the foundation of insight (*vipassanā*)?

What are the characteristics by which we may know that this is insight?

Just what is the activity called insight?

What should be the ultimate result of insight?

Asked what is the basis or foundation of insight we answer, morality and concentration. *Vipassanā* means clear insight and refers to the unobscured vision that may arise when a person's mind is full of joy and devoid of any defilement. Joy develops when there is moral purity (*sīla-visuddhi*). Morality is a prerequisite. This is stated in the texts (Rathavinīta Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, 24), where the practice is described as proceeding in a series



of stages called the seven purifications and culminating in the Path and the Fruit. Teachers regard the attainment of *moral purity* as the first of the seven purifications. It consists of faultless behavior and is prerequisite to *purification of the mind* (*citta-visuddhi*). Purification of the mind, achieved when the mind has been rendered free of any contamination, is conducive to purification of views (*diṭṭha-visuddhi*) or freedom from misunderstanding. Freedom from misunderstanding leads to purity by freedom from doubt (*kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*), and this is conducive in its turn to the arising of purity of knowledge and the vision of what is the true path to be followed and what is not the path. This knowledge of the path to be followed leads to the purity of knowledge and the vision of the progress along the path. This finally leads to the last stage of full intuitive insight or purity of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*), which is the most noble of paths. Because the fruit of the path arises automatically once the path is established, the attainment of the path is regarded as the culmination of the practice.

Moral purity is faultless behavior by way of body and speech. As long as any imperfection in body or speech remains, morality in the true sense is lacking. When it has been perfected, that is, when tranquillity of bodily activities and speech has been achieved, the result is bound to be mental tranquillity, conducive in its turn to the further stages of purification: freedom from misunderstanding, freedom from doubt, knowledge as to what is the path to be followed and what is not, knowledge and vision of the progress along the path, and finally full intuitive insight. These last five stages constitute *vipassanā*

proper. Purification of conduct and mind are merely the entrance into the path of insight.

The seven purifications, five stages in *vipassanā*, and nine steps in the perfection of knowledge can be schematized as follows:

- I            Moral purity
- II           Mental purity
- III (1) Freedom from false views
- IV (2) Freedom from doubt
- V (3) Knowledge and vision of what is the true path
- VI (4) Knowledge and vision of the progress along the path
  - (a) Knowledge of arising and passing away
  - (b) Knowledge of passing away
  - (c) Awareness of fearsomeness
  - (d) Awareness of danger
  - (e) Disenchantment
  - (f) Desire for freedom
  - (g) Struggle to escape
  - (h) Imperturbability
  - (j) Readiness to perceive the Four Noble Truths

#### VII (5) Full Intuitive Insight

The purification consisting of *freedom from misunderstanding* implies the elimination of all false views both inborn and acquired. It covers the whole range from irrational belief in magic to false ideas as to the true nature of things, for instance, regarding this body-and-mind as something enduring and worthwhile; failing to perceive that it consists of just the four elements, or of just body plus mind, and regarding it instead as a self; failing to see it as consisting of the five aggregates; and failing to see

it as just a mass of perceptions received by way of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. False views lead to belief in magic and sacred objects and so give rise to fear. Rites and rituals are then performed to neutralize the fear, and the end result is firm attachment to rites and rituals—all on account of false views. Such a situation indicates views that are not as yet faultless. To have given up false views is to have attained what was originally called the third purification, and what later teachers classified as the first stage in *vipassanā*.

The purification consisting of *freedom from doubt* is brought about by introspection into causes. With freedom from false views one sees oneself as just body plus mind. Freedom from doubt consists in perceiving the nature of the causes responsible for the coming into existence of the body-mind complex. One sees penetratingly and in fine detail the coming into existence and the interaction of ignorance, desire, grasping and clinging, *kamma*, and so on to form body-and-mind. Freedom from doubt results simply from this clear knowledge of the causes and effects of all things. In the *vipassanā* system, teachers recognize twenty or thirty kinds of doubt, but summed up they all amount to doubt as to whether or not one's self exists, whether or not one's self existed previously, whether or not one's self will continue to exist in the future and, if so, in what form. The only way doubt can be completely dispelled is to realize that there is no "I," but only elements, aggregates, a nervous system, together with such causes as ignorance, craving and attachment, *kamma*, and so on which serve to synthesize these components. With the complete eradication of doubt, the second stage in *vipassanā* has been achieved. This does not mean that the "I" conceit has been given up for good.

Fine vestiges are still present; however, adequate understanding of the mode of interaction of causes has resulted in the dispelling of doubt and has made it possible to give up the idea of "I" in its grossest forms.

When doubt has been transcended it becomes possible to bring about the purification consisting of *perfect knowledge as to what is the right path to follow* and what is not. There exist several obstacles to this further progress which usually arise in the course of *vipassanā* practice. While the mind is in a concentrated state there are likely to arise various strange phenomena with which the meditator may become overawed, such as wonderful impressive auras seen in the mind's eye. If these effects are purposely encouraged, they can become highly developed, and if the meditator jumps to the conclusion that this is the fruit of *vipassanā* practice or congratulates himself saying, "This is something supernatural," the arising of these phenomena is liable to bar the way to the true Path and the Fruit. Consequently teachers consider it a sidetrack, a blind alley. Another example is the arising of feelings of joy and contentment which continually overflow the mind to such an extent that it becomes incapable of any further introspection or jumps to the conclusion that this is Nibbāna here and now, so that the way becomes blocked and further progress is impossible. Teachers say, furthermore, that even insight into the nature of body-and-mind may sometimes lead to self-satisfaction and the delusion that the meditator has a remarkable degree of spiritual insight, leading to overconfidence and delusion. This, too, is an obstacle to progress in *vipassanā*.

Occasionally the meditator may make use of the mental power he has developed to make his body go rigid, with

the result that he loses the awareness necessary for further introspection. This is a stubborn obstacle in the path to further progress; yet meditators usually approve of it, regarding it as a supernatural faculty or even as the fruit of the path. Anyone who becomes so pleased with and infatuated by the attainment of deep concentration, of sitting with body rigid and devoid of all sensation, is unable to develop further insight and is in a most pitiable position.

Another condition that may very easily come about is a blissful rapture, the like of which the meditator has never encountered before. Once arisen, it induces wonder and amazement and unjustified self-satisfaction. While the rapture lasts the body and the mind experience extreme bliss and all problems vanish. Things that formerly were liked or disliked are liked or disliked no longer when recalled to mind. Things the meditator had formerly feared and dreaded or worried and fretted over no longer induce those reactions, so that he gets the false idea that he has already attained liberation, freedom from all defilements. For as long as he is in that condition he has all the characteristics of a genuinely perfected individual. Should satisfaction arise with respect to this condition, it acts as an obstacle to further progress in *vipassanā*. In time the condition will fade away, so that things formerly liked or disliked will be liked or disliked again, just as before, or even more so.

Yet another kind of obstacle involves faith. Faith or confidence never felt before becomes firmly established, for example, confidence in the Threefold Gem, Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, or in theories the meditator thinks out for himself. There may even come about a most intense satisfaction with doctrine. The ability to remain

unmoved by anything becomes so strongly developed that it may even delude the meditator into believing he has already attained the fruit of the path and Nibbāna itself. These obstructions afford a great difficulty for anyone encountering them for the first time. The meditator is likely to regard them as highly desirable, until such time as he develops the unobscured knowledge that these things are in fact obstacles and succeeds in cutting out these finer defilements completely. This knowledge of what is the right path and what is not constitutes the third stage in *vipassanā* and the fifth purification.

Until such time as the aspirant has developed this knowledge of what really constitutes the right path, he has to be always steering himself away from various sidetracks. However, once this knowledge of the path has become fully established, any further knowledge will automatically develop along the right line. It will progress step by step, bringing perfectly clear understanding of the true nature of things and, ultimately, perfect freedom from and noninvolvement in things. The mind, equipped with this right understanding, is set to attain the next insight into the Four Noble Truths, and is said to have attained the *purity by knowledge and vision of the progress along the path*. This is counted as the fourth stage in *vipassanā* and the sixth purification. The Tipiṭaka contains no detailed explanation of the stages in this knowledge and vision of the progress along the path, but later teachers recognized it in nine steps.

1. *Vipassanā* has progressed properly, and the birth, aging, pain, and death of phenomena have been thoroughly scrutinized. The arising and passing away of phenomena has been perceived in all clarity. All phenomenal existence is seen to consist of just an endless pro-

cess of arising and ceasing, like the glittering dazzle on the surface of the sea or like the forming and bursting of the foamy crests of waves. This is known as the *knowledge of arising and passing away*. It is brought about by such clear and sustained introspection that the knowledge is powerful enough to make the meditator become disenchanted with things and give up clinging to them. This is the first step in the knowledge and vision of the progress along the path.

2. Arising and passing away, if observed simultaneously, cannot be perceived with such clarity as it can if either one is concentrated on separately. At this stage the meditator gives up watching one of the two, namely, arising, and concentrates exclusively on the passing away. This permits him to see the process of disintegration and decay in such depth and intensity that he comes to realize that decay and perishing are universally evident no matter where one looks. A mind dwelling on this knowledge is said to be equipped with the *knowledge of decay and dissolution*. This is the second step in the developing of knowledge.

3. Knowledge of decay and dissolution, when sufficiently well developed, gives rise to the awareness that all things are to be feared. All phenomenal existence, whether in the sensual realm, in the form realm, or in the formless realm, is seen as inherently fearsome, because the decay and dissolution of all phenomena is perceived in every conscious moment. Thus an intense apprehension arises in the mind of one possessing this awareness and becomes established as a genuine fear. This *awareness of the fearsomeness* of all phenomenal existence is reckoned as the third step.

4. When awareness of the completely fearsome nature

of all phenomenal existence has been fully developed, there will arise in its turn awareness that all things are inherently dangerous. To become involved in things is not safe. They are like a forest full of dangerous beasts, and anyone seeking diversion in that forest finds nothing pleasing there. This *awareness of the danger* inherent in all phenomena is the fourth step.

5. When all things are seen as in every way full of danger, they give rise to disenchantment. They are seen as resembling a burned-out house of which nothing remains but ashes, a skeleton, utterly unattractive. This *disenchantment* with having to be associated with conditioned things is the fifth step in the developing of knowledge.

6. When genuine disenchantment has become established, there arises a desire to become really free from those things. This is quite unlike our ordinary desire for freedom which, lacking the power of concentration or insight, is not a real desire for freedom. The disenchantment arising out of *vipassanā* insight involves the entire mind, and the desire for freedom is as great as the disenchantment. This desire to escape from the unsatisfactoriness of phenomenal existence is as great as the desire for freedom of a frog struggling to escape from a snake's jaws, or the desire for freedom of a deer or bird struggling to break loose from a snare. This real *desire to escape* from unsatisfactoriness is the sixth step.

7. Now with the full development of the desire to escape there arises a feeling as of an intense struggling to find a way out, an everpresent feeling that, phenomenal existence being as it is, one has to escape from it. Through introspection one perceives the clinging and the defilements that are the cause of the mind's bondage, the fetters binding it securely to that condition. Consequently one



seeks for ways of weakening the defilements. Then, seeing the defilements weakened, one sets about destroying them completely.

This weakening of the defilements is illustrated by means of a simile. A man goes to his fish trap and pulls out a snake, thinking it to be a fish. When told it is a snake, he does not believe it, at least not until he meets a wise, benevolent, and sympathetic teacher who guides and instructs him until he comes to realize that it is in fact a snake. He then grows afraid and searches about for a means to kill it. He grabs the snake by the neck and, lifting it above his head, swings it in a circle until, exhausted, it falls dead. This simile illustrates the arising of the knowledge of the defilements as the cause of people's bondage to a condition so much to be feared and dreaded.

If one has no technique for reducing the force of the defilements day by day, eradicating them is bound to be impossible. The power of the defilements far exceeds that of the still-meager knowledge to be used in destroying them; hence, knowledge must be developed and increased, and the suffering produced by the defilements will simultaneously diminish. Always maintaining and developing the knowledge that all things are transient, worthless, and devoid of selfhood, that they are not worth getting or being, serves to cut off the food supply to the defilements, thereby weakening them day by day. It behooves us to build ourselves up, develop, and become more skillful and ingenious. By this means, we can conquer defilements the size of mountains, small though we may be. Our situation can be compared to that of a small mouse faced with the job of killing several tigers. We have to be very steadfast and always on the lookout for means appropriate to a small mouse. If we are to get anywhere, we must use all

sorts of devices and techniques to weaken the tigers day by day rather than trying to kill them outright. This intense *search for a way of escape* constitutes the seventh step in the knowledge and vision of the progress along the path.

8. This weakening of the defilements serves to make us progressively more and more independent of and oblivious to things. So this next step in the developing of right understanding, which results in imperturbability with respect to all things, consists in seeing all phenomena as empty, as devoid of essence, as devoid of any status such as "animal" or "person," devoid of substance or real permanence, devoid of worth because thoroughly unsatisfactory, and devoid of all attraction because thoroughly disenchanting. Ultimately the mind becomes independent of and unperturbed by anything in any realm of existence. Things formerly likable, desirable, and infatuating come to be seen as lumps of rock and earth. This *indifference to all phenomena* is the eighth step.

9. The mind thus independent of and unmoved by all phenomenal existence is *ready to perfect the path and know the Four Noble Truths*.<sup>20</sup> At this stage one is prepared to overcome the defilements, to break the fetters binding one to the world, and become an *ariya* of one degree or another. This is the ninth step in the process of knowledge and vision of progress along the path.

When this step-by-step development of knowledge, from the knowledge of the arising and passing away up to the state of readiness to perceive the Four Noble Truths, has been carried through to completion, one is said to have achieved the fourth stage in *vipassanā*, or the sixth purification. The pure and perfect knowledge it yields is an instrument that reveals to the meditator the path by

which he has come, and can lead on to the perfect intuitive insight that will destroy the defilements.

This perfect intuitive insight or purity of knowledge and vision, the seventh purification, is the insight that arises out of the perfected path. It is the goal, the fruit of *vipassanā* practice. This insight which arises out of the perfected path is the fifth and final stage in *vipassanā*. In between the stage of the readiness to perceive the Noble Truths and this perfect intuitive insight comes *qualifying knowledge*, which marks the point of transition from the ordinary defiled individual to the *ariya*. But this qualifying knowledge lasts only an instant. It is the culmination of the progressive perfection of knowledge and is still at the level of good *kamma* in the sensual realm.

To sum up, then, *vipassanā* has as its foundation morality and concentration. What do we examine? The answer is that we examine all things, or, to use other terms, the phenomenal existence of conditioned things or the five aggregates, since all phenomenal existence consists of nothing apart from the five aggregates. What do we aim at seeing as a result of this scrutiny? We aim at seeing the transience, the unsatisfactoriness, and the nonselfhood inherent in all things in the world. We observe them arising, persisting, and ceasing until we come to perceive them as absolutely fearsome and disenchanting and realize that nothing is worth getting or being. These are the conditions that ought to arise in insight practice. What is the objective of *vipassanā*? The immediate objective of *vipassanā* is to reduce delusion, its meaning being "clear vision." What is the fruit of *vipassanā*? The fruit is the arising of clear intuitive insight, clear and enduring insight into the nature of all things, which ultimately will reduce the defilements to nothing. With the defilements gone,

there is perfection, enlightenment, peace. Nothing remains to bind the mind to any worldly condition. As a result there comes about a slipping free from the world, this place of slavery to sensuality. The Buddha called this the attainment of the cessation of suffering, the attainment of the fruit of the path, Nibbāna. To have achieved this end is to have carried to completion the task Buddhism has set for us.

### EMANCIPATION FROM THE WORLD

*Vipassanā* meditation is mental training aimed at raising the mind to such a level that it is no longer subject to suffering. The mind breaks free from suffering by virtue of the clear knowledge that nothing is worth grasping at or clinging to. This knowledge deprives worldly things of their ability to lead the mind into further thoughtless liking or disliking. Having this knowledge, the mind transcends the worldly condition and attains the level known as the supramundane plane (*lokuttara-bhūmi*).

In order to comprehend clearly the supramundane plane, we have to know first about its opposite, the mundane plane (*lokiya-bhūmi*). The mundane plane comprises those levels at which the things of the world have control over the mind. Very briefly, three levels are recognized in the mundane plane, namely, the sensual level (*rāmāvacara-bhūmi*) or the level of a mind still content with pleasures of every kind; the level of form (*rūpāvacara-bhūmi*) or the condition of a mind uninterested in sensual objects but finding satisfaction in the various stages of concentration on forms as objects; and, lastly, the formless level (*arūpāvacara-bhūmi*), the yet-higher level of a mind finding satisfaction in the bliss and peace of concentration on ob-

jects other than form. These three levels in the worldly plane are the mental levels of beings in general. Regardless of whether we presume to call them human beings, celestial beings, gods, beasts, or denizens of hell, they are all included within the three worldly levels. The mind of a worldling can at any particular time exist in any one of these three planes. As a rule, though, it will tend to fall back naturally to the unconcentrated sensual level. The human mind normally falls under the influence of the delightful in colors and shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactual objects. Only on certain occasions is it able to escape from the influence of these seductive things and experience the tranquillity and bliss that come from practicing concentration on forms or other objects. It all depends on concentration.

At certain times, then, a person's mind may be located in any of these levels of concentration. In India at the time of the Buddha this must have been fairly common, because people who had gone in search of the tranquillity and bliss associated with the various levels of concentration were to be found living in forests all over the country. At the present time such people are few, but it is nevertheless possible for the ordinary man to attain these levels. If someone in this world is in the process of experiencing the bliss of full concentration on a form, then for him the world consists of just that form because he is aware of nothing else. At that time and for that person, the world is equivalent to just that one form, and it remains so until such time as his mental condition changes.

Even though a person dwelling in any of these three levels may have gained such bliss, calm, and tranquillity that he has come to resemble a rock, a lump of earth, or a log of wood, grasping and clinging to selfhood are still

present. Also present are various kinds of desire, albeit of the finest and most tenuous sort, such as dissatisfaction with the state in which he finds himself, which prompts him to go in search of a new state. That desire for change constitutes *kamma*, so such a person has not yet transcended the worldly state. He is not yet in the supramundane plane.

A mind dwelling in the supramundane plane has transcended the world. It views the worldly state as devoid of essence, self, or substance, and will have nothing of it. Dwellers in this supramundane plane can be further classified into grades. There are four levels of Path and Fruit, namely, the levels of the stream enterer (*sotāpanna*), the once returner (*sakadāgāmin*), the never returner (*anāgāmin*), and the completely perfected individual or *arahant*. The condition of these four kinds of noble individuals, or *ariya*, is the supramundane condition. Supramundane means above the world and refers to the mind, not the body. The body can be anywhere at all as long as living conditions are adequate. Supramundane simply describes a mind transcending the world. As for the netherworlds such as hell, purgatory, or the places of suffering, torment, and bondage, these are out of the question for the *ariya*.

The criteria for recognizing these four levels in the supramundane plane are the various mental impurities which are in the process of being eliminated. The Buddha divided the impurities in this group into ten kinds. He called them the fetters (*samyojana*). These ten fetters bind man and all beings to the world, keeping people in the mundane plane. If a person starts to cut through these fetters and breaks loose, his mind gradually and progressively becomes freed from the worldly condition; and when he manages to cut through them completely, his mind

becomes absolutely free, transcends the world forever, and comes to dwell permanently in the supramundane plane.

Of these ten kinds of subtle mental impurities that bind us, the first is the *self-belief*, the view that the body-and-mind is "my self." It is a misunderstanding or misconception based on clinging to the idea "I am." Because the average person is not aware of the true nature of body-and-mind, he unthinkingly regards these two as his self. This instinctive idea that there is an "I" or a "mine" is so firmly ingrained that normally no one ever doubts its existence. True, the self-instinct is what makes life possible, being the basis of self-preservation, the search for food, and propagation of the species, but in this case what we are calling the self-belief is to be taken only in its most basic sense as the root cause of selfishness. This is considered to be the first of the fetters to be done away with before anything else.

The second fetter is *doubt*, the cause of wavering and uncertainty. Most importantly it is doubt concerning the practice leading to liberation from suffering—doubt due to inadequate knowledge, doubt as to what this subject is really all about, doubt as to whether this practice of breaking free from suffering is really the right thing for one, whether one is really capable of carrying it through, whether it is really better than other things, whether or not it really does any good, whether the Buddha really did attain enlightenment, whether he really did achieve liberation from suffering, whether the Buddha's teaching and the practical method based on his teaching really do lead to liberation from suffering, and whether it is really possible for a bhikkhu in the Sangha to attain liberation from suffering.

The root cause of hesitancy is ignorance. A fish that has always lived in the water, if told about life on dry land, would be sure to believe none of it or at most only half of it. We, immersed as we are in sensuality, are as habituated to sensuality as is the fish to water, so that when someone speaks of transcending sensuality or transcending the world we cannot understand, or what we can understand we are hesitant about. It is natural for us to think on this lower level. To think on the high level produces a new picture. The conflict between high-level thinking and low-level thinking constitutes wavering. If mental energy is insufficient, low-level thinking will triumph. Doubt and wavering with regard to goodness is something chronically present in everyone right from birth. In a person who has been brought up incorrectly it may be a very common complaint. We have to note the bad consequences of this wavering which is present to such an extent in our work and our everyday living that we become skeptical about goodness, truth, and liberation from suffering.

The third fetter is superstition or *attachment to rules and rituals* based on a misunderstanding of their real purpose. Essentially it is a misguided attachment to certain things one does. Usually it has to do with doctrines and ceremonies. An example of this is belief in magic and magical practices, which is blatantly just superstition and occurs even among Buddhists. Practice based on the belief that it will produce magical abilities, psychic powers, and protective forces is founded on false and irrational hopes. Another example is the undertaking of the moral precepts or virtuous conduct of Buddhism. The real purpose of morality is to eliminate mental defilements, but if we believe that it will give rise to miraculous powers enabling us to eradicate the defilements, we are in fact grasping and



clinging and so defeating our original purpose. Ethical practice is quite correct in itself, but if we misunderstand it and cling to it irrationally, regarding it as something magical or sacred, then it becomes pure superstition. Even taking upon oneself the moral precepts, if done in the belief that it will lead to rebirth as a celestial being, is an example of attachment to rules and rituals and goes contrary to Buddhist aims. Such beliefs contaminate otherwise virtuous conduct. The objective of the Buddhist discipline is the elimination of the cruder defilements of body and speech as a foundation for the progressive development of concentration and insight. The objective is not rebirth in heaven. To have such false motives is to soil and contaminate one's own morals with grasping, clinging, and false ideas. Charity or adherence to moral precepts or meditation practice, if carried out with a mistaken idea of their true objective, inevitably leads one astray from the Buddhist path.

Even Buddhist practice becomes superstition instead if associated with misunderstanding because craving has entered and taken over, bringing the expectation of mystical powers. This applies even to very small and trivial things in which most of us like to indulge, such as ritual chanting, merit-making, and the like. The ceremony of placing rice and trays of sweetmeats before the Buddha's image, if performed in the belief that it is an offering to the Buddha's "spirit" and that he will be able to partake of it, is certain to produce effects precisely the opposite of what the devotee is hoping for. Behavior that defeats its own true purpose is generally quite common in Buddhist circles. It is foolish and irrational and results in practices originally worthwhile and attractive becoming contaminated with the stupidity and ignorance of the people performing them.

Such defilement has its origins in delusion and misunderstanding.

When these first three defilements, namely, self-belief, doubt, and superstition, have been completely given up, one is said to have attained the lowest level in the supramundane plane, that is, to have become a stream enterer. To give up completely these three defilements is not difficult because they are primitive qualities possessed by primitive, underdeveloped people. In anyone who has studied and progressed, these three elements should not be present. If they are, then that person's mind should be considered still primitive. Anyone ought to be able to give up these three defilements and become an *ariya*. If he cannot, he is still foolish and deluded, or, to use the best term, a worldling (*puthujjana*), someone with a thick blindfold covering the eye of insight.

When any individual has managed to give up these defilements his mind is freed from bondage to the world. These three defilements are ignorance and delusion obscuring the truth and fetters binding the mind to the world. Giving them up is like rendering ineffective three kinds of bondage or three blindfolds, slipping free and rising beyond the world into the first supramundane level. This is what it is to become an *ariya* of the first degree, to attain the first level in the supramundane plane. Such an individual is called a stream enterer, one who has attained for the first time the stream that flows on to Nibbāna. In other words, an individual at this stage is certain to attain Nibbāna at some time in the future. What he has attained is only the stream of Nibbāna, not Nibbāna itself. Though it may still take some time, a mind which has once entered the stream is certain to achieve Nibbāna eventually.

Attaining the second level in the supramundane plane

implies giving up the three fetters just mentioned and, further, being able to attenuate certain types of craving, aversion, and delusion to such a degree that the mind becomes elevated and only very feebly attached to sensuality. It is traditionally held that an individual who achieves this level will return to this world at most only once more, hence he is known as a once returner. A once returner is closer to Nibbāna than a stream enterer, for there remains in him no more than a trace of worldliness. Should he return to the sensual human world, he will do so not more than once because craving, aversion, and delusion, though not completely eliminated, have become exceedingly attenuated.

The third stage is that of the never returner. This grade of *ariya*, besides having succeeded in giving up the defilements to the extent necessary for becoming a once returner, has also managed to give up the fourth and fifth fetters. The fourth fetter is *sensual desire* and the fifth is *ill will*. Neither the stream enterer nor the once returner has completely given up sensual desire. In both of them there is still a remnant of satisfaction in alluring and desirable objects. Even though they have managed to give up self-belief, doubt, and superstition, they are still unable to relinquish completely their attachment to sensuality, of which some traces remain. But an *ariya* at the third stage, a never returner, has succeeded in giving sensuality up completely, so that not a trace remains. The defilement called ill will, which includes all feelings of anger or resentment, has been washed out to a large extent by the once returner, so that there remains only a trace of ill humor to obstruct his mind. The never returner, however, has eliminated it altogether. Thus the never returner has thrown off both sensual desire and ill will.

Sensual desire, or attachment to and satisfaction in sensuality, is a chronic defilement, firmly fixed in the mind as if it were of the same substance. For the ordinary man, it is hard to understand and difficult to eradicate. Anything at all can serve as an object for desire: colors and shapes, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactual objects of any kind. These are sensual objects (*kāma*), and the state of mental attachment that takes the form of satisfaction in these desirable objects is sensual desire (*kāma-rāga*).

What we call ill will is the reaction of a mind that feels dissatisfaction. If there is satisfaction, there is sensual desire; if dissatisfaction, ill will. Most people's minds are subject to these two states. Ill will may arise toward even inanimate objects, and what is more, one can even be dissatisfied with the things that arise in one's own mind. Where there is actual hatred and anger toward an object, ill will has become too fierce. An *ariya* at a stage below the nonreturner has given it up to a degree appropriate to his station. The ill will that remains for the third grade to relinquish is a mental reaction so subtle that possibly no outward evidence of it appears. It is an inner perturbation not revealed by any facial expression yet present inwardly as dissatisfaction, irritation, or annoyance at some person or thing that does not conform to expectations. Imagine a person completely devoid of every form of ill will. Consider what an exceptional individual he would be and how worthy of respect.

The five defilements we have just been discussing were grouped together by the Buddha as the first to be given up. Self-belief, doubt, supersition, sensual desire, and ill will have all been given up by an *ariya* at the third level. Because there remains no sensual desire, this grade of *ariya* never again returns to the sensual state of existence.

This is why he gets the name never returner, one who will never come back. For him there is only movement forward and upward to sainthood and Nibbāna, a state having nothing to do with sensuality, a supreme, divine condition. As for the five remaining defilements, these only the *arahant*, the fourth grade of *ariya*, succeeds in relinquishing completely.

The next defilement, the sixth of the fetters, is desire for the bliss associated with the various stages of *concentration on forms*. The first three grades are still not capable of giving up attachment to the bliss and tranquillity obtainable by concentrating deeply on forms, but they will succeed in doing so when they move up to the last stage, that of the *arahant*. This fully concentrated state has a captivating flavor which can be described as a foretaste of Nibbāna. Though it differs from Nibbāna, it has more or less the same flavor. While one is fully concentrated the defilements are dormant, but they have not evaporated entirely and will reappear as soon as concentration is lost. However, as long as they are dormant the mind is empty, clear, free, and knows the flavor of Nibbāna. Consequently this state can also become a cause of attachment.

The seventh subtle defilement is desire for the bliss associated with full *concentration on objects other than forms*. It resembles the sixth fetter but is one degree more subtle and attenuated. Concentration on an object such as space or emptiness yields a tranquillity and quiescence more profound than concentration on a form, with the result that one may become attached to that state. No *arahant* could ever become fascinated by any state of pleasant feeling whatsoever, regardless of where it originated, because an *arahant* is automatically aware of the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and nonselfhood of every



feeling state. Other hermits and mystics practicing concentration in the forest do not perceive the hidden danger in these blissful states and so become fascinated by and attached to the flavor of them, just as immature people become attached to the flavor of sensual objects. For this reason the Buddha used the same word "desire" for both cases.

The eighth fetter binding a man to the world is *awareness of superiority or inferiority*. It is the delusion of having this or that status relative to another. It consists in the thought: "I am not as good as he is. I am just as good as he is. I am better or higher than he is." Thinking "I am not as good as . . .," one feels inferior; thinking "I am better than . . .," one thinks along competitive lines or in terms of getting ahead of the other fellow. Not to think automatically of oneself as better or worse than the other fellow in this fashion is very difficult. The placing of this defilement as number eight is probably meant to indicate that it is difficult to eliminate and so belongs near the end of the list. Only the highest grade of *ariya* can relinquish it. The likes of us naturally cannot give it up. This idea that one is better than, on a par with, or not as good as the other fellow comes from a certain kind of attachment. As long as the mind is still involved in good and bad, the awareness of inferiority, superiority, or equality with respect to others remains to disturb it; however, when it has completely transcended good and bad such ideas cannot exist. As long as such ideas remain, real bliss and tranquillity are lacking.

The ninth fetter is agitation, that is, *mental unrest, distraction, lack of peace and quiet*. The feeling of agitation arises when something interesting comes by. We all have certain chronic wishes, particularly a desire to get, to be,

not to get, or not to be, one thing or another. When something comes by, via eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, which fits in with one of our tendencies, a mental reaction pro or con is likely to result. If we see something new and strange, curiosity is bound to arise because there are still things that we want, fear, and mistrust. So the mind cannot resist. It has to be interested in the various things passing by. If the object in question happens to coincide with a person's desire, he finds it hard to resist. He is likely to become interested to the point of becoming involved, or pleased to the point of forgetting himself. If it is an undesirable object, the mind becomes depressed so that his gratification comes to an end. This is the nature of agitation.

The first three grades of sainthood still have curiosity and inquisitiveness about things, but the *arahant* has none at all. His mind has abolished all desire for anything whatsoever. It has abolished fear and hatred, worry and anxiety, mistrust and doubt, and all desire to know about and see things. His mind is free. Nothing can provoke or lure him and arouse inquisitiveness or curiosity, simply because he has abolished partiality. It should be realized that the existence or arising of agitation in any situation is a consequence of some form of desire, including the desire for knowledge. When desire has been done away with through realizing the impermanence, worthlessness, and nonselfhood of all things, nothing is any longer seen as worth getting or being, and so there is no curiosity about anything. If a bolt of lightning were to strike right beside an *arahant*, he would not be interested because he has no fear of death, or craving for continued existence. Even if something dangerous came along or if something entirely new were discovered in the world, he would know no inquisi-

tiveness or curiosity because such things have no significance for him. He has no wish to know about anything from the point of view of what it may have to offer him. Because there is nothing for which he longs, he has no curiosity of any kind, and his mind has a purity and tranquillity such as we ordinary folk have never attained.

The tenth and last defilement is *ignorance*. This covers every kind of defilement not yet mentioned. The word "ignorance" refers to a condition of lack of knowledge, and in this case, knowledge means real or correct knowledge. Naturally no creature can exist without having some knowledge; but, if that knowledge is false, it has the same value as no knowledge. Most people suffer from chronic ignorance or false knowledge. Most of us are benighted and fail to ask: "What is suffering, really?" "What is the real cause of the arising of suffering?" "What is real freedom from suffering?" and "What is the real way to attain freedom from suffering?" If some individual has real knowledge, if he is free of ignorance, he is reckoned as enlightened. The totality of human knowledge is of untold extent, but the Buddha classed most of it as not essential. The Buddha's enlightenment encompassed only what need be known. The word "omniscient," or "all-knowing," means knowing just as much as need be known. It does not include anything nonessential.

Ignorance causes people to misidentify suffering as pleasure to such an extent that they swim around in circles in a sea of suffering. It also causes them to misidentify the cause of suffering so that they blame the wrong things—spirits, celestial beings, or anything at all—as the cause of their pain and misfortune, instead of rectifying the situation by the right means. The making of vows to spirits and celestial beings is a manifestation of the lowest level of



ignorance. Another mistaken assumption is that the bliss and tranquillity or unawareness brought about by deep concentration is the complete extinction of suffering. Certain schools of thought have even come to regard sensuality as an instrument for extinguishing suffering, so that sects with shameful, obscene practices have arisen even in temples. They firmly believe that sensuality is something quite essential, a kind of vital nourishment. Not content with just the four necessities of life, namely, food, clothing, shelter, and medicine, they add an extra one, sensuality.

A person ignorant about the path that leads to the extinction of suffering is liable to act foolishly and be motivated by his own desires, as if he had no religion at all. Such a person, though he may be a Buddhist by birth, is able to go to foolish lengths simply because the power of ignorance prevents his understanding or being content with extinguishing suffering by way of the Noble Eightfold Path. Instead, he goes about extinguishing suffering by lighting incense and candles and making pledges to supposedly supernatural things.

Every normal person wishes to gain knowledge; however, if the knowledge he gains is false, then the more he knows the more deluded he becomes. Thus some kinds of knowledge can blind the eyes. We have to be careful with this word "enlightenment." The "light" may be the glare of ignorance which blinds and deludes the eye and gives rise to overconfidence. Blinded by the glare of ignorance we are unable to think straight and so are in no position to defeat suffering. We waste our time with trivialities, nonessential things unworthy of our respect. We become infatuated with sensuality, taking it to be something excellent and essential for human beings, something of

which every man ought to get his share before he dies. Furthermore, we make the excuse that we are doing it for the sake of some ideal, such as hope for rebirth in heaven. Attachment to anything whatsoever, particularly sensuality, comes about because ignorance has enveloped the mind, cutting off all means of escape. At several places in the Pāli texts, ignorance is compared to a thick shell covering the whole world and preventing people from seeing the real light.

The Buddha placed ignorance last in the list of the ten fetters. When a person becomes an *arahant*, the highest grade of *ariya*, he completely eliminates the five remaining fetters or defilements. He eliminates the desire for forms, desire for objects other than forms, status consciousness, agitation, and ignorance. The four kinds of *ariya*—stream enterer, once returner, never returner, and *arahant*—dwell in the supramundane plane. What they have attained is called the supramundane. For an individual in the supramundane plane, suffering is diminished in accordance with the status until ultimately he is completely free of it. When a person once succeeds in attaining unobscured and perfect insight into the true nature of things so that he is able to stop desiring anything whatsoever, he has attained the supramundane plane and his mind has transcended the worldly condition. When he has completely and utterly relinquished all the mental defilements, his mind is rendered permanently free of all the worldly things it formerly liked and disliked.

Nibbāna is a condition not in any way comparable to any other. It is unlike any worldly condition; in fact, it is the very negation of the worldly condition. Given all the characteristics of the worldly condition, of phenom-

enal existence, then the result of completely canceling out all those characteristics would be Nibbāna. That is to say, Nibbāna is that which is in every respect precisely the opposite of the worldly condition. Nibbāna neither creates nor is created, being the cessation of all creating. Speaking in terms of benefits, Nibbāna is complete freedom from scourging and torture, bondage, subjection, and thralldom, because the attainment of Nibbāna presupposes the complete elimination of the defilements which are the cause of all unsatisfactory mental states. Nibbāna lies beyond the limitations of space and time. It is unique, unlike anything in the world. Rather, it is the extinction of the worldly condition. Speaking metaphorically, the Buddha called it the realm where all conditioned things cease to be (*sankhāra-samatha*). Hence it is the condition of freedom, of freedom from fetters. It is the end of torment, buffeting, and chafing, from any cause whatsoever. This is the nature of the supramundane, the ultimate. It is the Buddhist goal and destination. It is the final Fruit of Buddhist practice.

In the foregoing pages we have explained systematically the principles of Buddhism. We have presented it as an organized practical system designed to bring knowledge of the true nature of things. In reality things are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not selves, but all creatures are attracted by things and become attached to them simply through misunderstanding. The Buddhist practice, based on morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and insight (*paññā*), is a tool to be used for completely cutting out grasping and clinging. The objects of our clinging are the five aggregates: body, feeling, consciousness, active thinking, and knowing. When we have come to

know the true nature of the five aggregates we understand all things so well that desire gives way to disenchantment and we no longer cling to any of them.

What we have to do is lead the kind of life described as "right living" and be full day and night with the joy that arises out of conduct that is consistently good, beautiful, and right. This limits aimless wandering of the thoughts and makes it possible to concentrate and to have clear insight at all times. Then if conditions are right, the result is disenchantment, breaking loose, slipping free, or even complete Nibbāna. If we wish to hurry and gain quick results, there is the line of practice called *vipassanā*, which begins with moral and mental purity and carries right through to perfect and unobscured intuitive insight. By this means we can completely cut through the fetters that bind us fast to this world and attain the final fruit of the path.

This is a brief account of the whole of Buddha-Dhamma from beginning to end, including both theoretical and practical principles, and covering the entire subject from first steps to final fruit. The whole story ends with Nibbāna. As the Buddha said, "All Buddhas recognize Nibbāna as the highest good." So, it behooves us to practice in order to realize and attain that which should be realized and attained. Doing this, we shall deserve to be called Buddhists; we shall gain insight and penetrate to the real essence of Buddha-Dhamma. If we do not practice Buddha-Dhamma, we shall only know about it and shall lack true insight. It rests with each of us to practice introspection, observe and understand his own imperfections, and try to root them out completely. Even if one is only half successful, some clear understanding will result. As the defilements are progressively elimi-

nated, their place will be taken by purity, insight, and peace. Do not waste the advantages of having been born a human being and having encountered the Buddha's teaching. Do not miss this chance to be a perfect human being.

## GLOSSARY OF PĀLI TERMS

- ABHIDHAMMA. Higher teaching. Also refers to the third division of the Theravāda canonical writings.
- ANĀGĀMIN. Never returner. Third of the four stages of sanctification, or sainthood, on the path to Nibbāna. He will never be reborn in the wheel of rebirth.
- ĀNĀPĀNA. Inhaled and exhaled breath. ĀNĀPĀNA-SATI: breathing mindfulness.
- ANATTĀ. No-self, nonessential nature of mundane existence. Together with suffering (*dukkha*) and impermanence (*anicca*) makes up the three salient characteristics of existence.
- ANICCA. Impermanence; transience; flux. One of the three salient characteristics of existence.
- APĀYA. Going out; state of loss and woe after death. The four woeful states after death are purgatory or hell (*niraya*), animal existence, ghosts (*peta*), and demons (*asura*).
- ARAHANT. Worthy one. Highest state of sanctification on the path to the realization of Nibbāna.
- ARIYA. Noble; distinguished by high birth. At the rise of Buddhism the term applied to all ascetics.

ASURA. Demon; frightened ghost. One of the evil states into which a person may be reborn.

ATTA. The self or soul. ATTASARAṆA: to take refuge in oneself alone.

AVIJJĀ. Ignorance; without knowledge.

BHAVA. Becoming; state of existence. The three states of existence are conventionally enumerated as sensual (*kāma*), corporeal (*rūpa*), and formless (*arūpa*).

BRAHMACARYA. One who leads a holy or religious life, particularly of chastity.

BRAHMALOKA. World of celestial beings. Includes twenty heavens, sixteen realms of form (*rūpaloka*), and four of nonform (*arūpaloka*). A reward for virtuous deeds. The BRAHMA-S are a class of deities.

CETA. Mind; heart; consciousness. Same meaning as *citta*. CETOVIMUTTA: liberated mind or heart.

CITTA. Mind; heart; consciousness. The core of one's conscious existence.

DASSANA. Seeing; looking; noticing.

DHAMMA. One of the most important words in Buddhism. Wide variety of meanings, including fundamental constituent, natural law, moral law, teaching of the Buddha. PARIYATTI-DHAMMA: accomplishment in the teachings of the Buddha. PAṬI-PATTI-DHAMMA: following the teachings of the Buddha.

DHĀTU. Basic element. May refer in particular to the four elements (earth, water, fire, and wind), to physical elements, or to elements of sense consciousness.

DIṬṬHA. That which is seen; hence, opinions or views.



DIṬṬHA-DHAMMIKATTHA: profit or gain of the world or the things that are seen.

DUKKHA. Suffering; ill; unsatisfactoriness. One of the three salient characteristics of existence.

EKAGGATĀ. One-pointedness of mind; concentration.

GANTHA. Bound or put together; hence, books or study.

GANTHADHURA: a system for studying the Scriptures.

JĀTI. Birth; rebirth.

JHĀNA. Trance state; state of mental absorption. Often a part of the conventional formula of four or eight levels. ARUPA-JHĀNA: immaterial states of mental absorption. RUPA-JHĀNA: material states of mental absorption. JHĀNAKĪLA: concentration game.

KĀMA. Desire; pleasure; sense enjoyment. KĀMA-BHOGIN: enjoying pleasures of the senses. KĀMA-RĀGA: sensual passion; lust.

KAMMA (Sanskrit, KARMA). Act; deed. Often refers to the law of Karma, a law of moral retribution.

KAMMATṬHĀNA. Occupation; profession; ground for contemplating deeds; hence, objects of meditation.

KANKHĀ. Doubt; uncertainty. KANKHĀVITARAṆA: overcoming doubt.

KHANDHA. Aggregate; group; collection. Conventionally refers to the five aggregates or components of sentient existence.

KILESA. Stain; soil. In a moral sense, depravity or lust.

LOKIYA. Mundane; worldly. Opposite of *lokuttara*.

LOKUTTARA. Supramundane. Contrasted with *lokiya*.

LOKUTTARA-DHAMMA: supramundane things.

LOKUTTARA-BHŪMI: supramundane plane. Con-



trasted with mundane plane (*lokiya-bhūmi*) and sensual plane (*rāmavacara-bhūmi*).

**MAGGA.** Path; the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism.

**MAGGA-PHALA:** the Fruit of the Path.

**ÑĀṆA.** Knowledge; intelligence; recognition. **ÑĀṆA-DASSANAVISUDDHI:** purity of knowledge and vision.

**NIBBĀNA** (Sanskrit, **NIRVĀṆA**). The state of final liberation; to be fully emancipated from sensate attachments.

**NIBBIDĀ.** Weariness; disgust with worldly life; aversion.

**NĪVARAṆA.** Hindrances or obstacles, usually in the ethical sense. Conventional formula lists five hindrances.

**PAÑÑĀ.** Knowledge. Often regarded as higher or emancipating knowledge (*vimutta*). **PAÑÑINDRIYA:** instrument or power of wisdom.

**PAṬICCA-SAMUPPĀDA.** Conditioned arising. Refers to a conventional twelvefold formula beginning with ignorance and ending with old age and death.

**PETA.** Hungry ghost. One of the evil states into which a person may be born in the cycle of rebirth.

**PĪTI.** Rapture; joy.

**PUTHUJJANA.** An ordinary man; one of many.

**SAKADĀGĀMIN.** Once returner. Second of the four stages of sanctification on the way to Nibbāna. He will be reborn only once in the world of conditioned existence.

**SAMĀDHI.** Concentration; focusing the consciousness.

**UPACĀRA-SAMĀDHI:** access concentration.

**SAMATHA.** Calm; tranquillity. **SAMATHA-BHĀV-ANĀ:** producing calm; meditation.

SAMPAJAÑÑĀ. Attention; concentration; discrimination.

SAMYOJANA. The ten fetters binding man to the wheel of rebirth. Conventionally enumerated as belief in a self, doubt, attachment to rites, sensual desire, ill will, desire for form objects, desire for formless objects, pride, mental unrest, and ignorance.

SANGHA. The Buddhist Order. Together with the Buddha and his teachings (Dhamma) referred to as the Three Gems or Three Refuges of Buddhism.

SANKHĀRA. Coefficient or constituent of psycho-physical existence. Also one of the five *khandhās*.

SANKHATA. Put together; compounded and, hence, conditioned. Opposite of *asankhata*, uncompounded.

SANKHATA-DHAMMA: compounded things.

SAÑÑĀ. Perception. One of the five aggregates (*khandha-s*).

SANTI. Peace; calm.

SARANA. Refuge.

SĀSANA. Religion; teaching; Buddhist doctrine.

SATI. Mindfulness. SATIPATṬHĀNA: foundation of mindfulness.

SĪLA. Moral virtue; morality; ethics; rules of proper behavior.

SOTĀPANNA. Stream enterer. First stage of the four stages of sanctification on the way to Nibbāna.

SUKHA. Happiness; joy. SUKHA-VIPASSAKA: one who has the happiness and joy of insight.

TANHĀ. Thirst; desire; craving.

TIPITAKA. The three major divisions ("baskets") of the Theravāda canon: Sutta, Vinaya, Abhidhamma.

UPĀDĀNA. Attachment; clinging to. Classified as four

graspings: sense desire, dogmatic opinions, belief in the efficacy of rites and rituals, belief in a self.

VEDANĀ. Feeling; sensation. One of the five aggregates (*khandha-s*).

VICĀRA. Sustained thought; investigation; consideration.

VIMUTTA. Emancipation; liberation; freedom.

VINAYA. Norm of conduct; discipline. Rules for the monastic order. A division of the Theravāda canon.

VIÑÑĀṆA. Principle of consciousness. One of the five aggregates (*khandha-s*).

VIPASSANĀ. Insight; inward vision. VIPASSANĀ-

BHĀVANĀ: the process of gaining insight. VIPAS-

SANĀDHURA: system for developing insight.

VIRĀGA. Dispassionateness; absence of desire.

VISUDDHI. Purity.

VITAKKA. Applied or conceptual thought.

## NOTES

1. A brief discussion of Buddhadāsa, with particular attention to a more systematic presentation of his thought, appears in my book *Buddhism in Transition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), Chapter IV.

2. Buddhadāsa, *Sing Tii Raw Jang Sonjaikan Nɔɔj Pai* ("Things in Which We Still Have Too Little Interest") (Chiangmai: World Fellowship of Buddhists, 1957), p. 14.

3. Buddhadāsa, *Buddhism and Christianity* (Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission, 1968), Introduction.

4. *Ibid.*

5. The English title from the Thai reads, "Toward Buddha-Dhamma." In this case I have simply rendered the Pāli term "Dhamma" as "Truth."

6. The Pāli canon of Theravāda Buddhism is divided into three *piṭaka*-s ("baskets") or sections, one of which, the Sutta-piṭaka, is further divided into subsections or Nikāyas. One of the subsections is entitled the Anguttara Nikāya, usually translated as the Book of Gradual Sayings.

7. The Buddha, his teachings (Dhamma), and the monastic order (Sangha) are referred to as the Three Gems or the Three Refuges. Buddhist worship often begins with the chanting of the Three Refuges: "I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dhamma; I take refuge in the Sangha."

8. The wheel is one of the most pervasive symbols in the Indian religious tradition. In the Upanishads, for exam-

ple, it represents Brahman or ultimate reality, and it is frequently depicted in early Buddhist iconography. The first sermon of the Buddha is referred to as Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma.

9. The four stages may be referred to as the Four Stages of Sanctification or the Four Stages of the Supramundane Life. It is one of the many ways that the Theravāda tradition employs to delineate progress along the path to salvation or freedom (*vimutta*).

10. The Paranimmita-vasavatti is one of the five or three realms in the Kāmaloka, or "world of desire," in the Buddhist cosmology. This cosmology depicts a number of realms or spheres surrounding an *axis mundi* or cosmic mountain (Mt. Meru). One means of classifying the cosmic levels is discussed in the concluding section of Chapter V.

11. The dialogue referred to here is the Angulimālasutta, Majjhima Nikāya (Middle-Length Dialogues) II, 86.

12. The analytical nature of Theravāda Buddhism takes a variety of forms, but none is more important than the analysis applied to existence. Complementing the denial of an essential nature or being (*anattā*) is the assertion that existent entities are actually composites of particles in a continual process of change (*anicca*) or death and rebirth. The forms or structures of these processes include the *khandha*-s, *ayātana*-s, and *dhātu*-s.

13. Merit-making is one of the most important acts of piety carried out by lay Buddhists. It takes a variety of forms, ranging from giving rice to the monks on their daily begging rounds to such simple acts as applying a small square of gold leaf on a statue of the Buddha. Practices of merit-making, when taken as an end in themselves with the purpose of attaining a better position in this life or the next, are roundly criticized by Buddhādāsa.

14. Chapter V, "Handbook for Mankind," is a series of lectures delivered by Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa to a group of students of jurisprudence in 1956. All together nine lectures were given, of which six are included here.

15. Throughout this essay the translator frequently renders the term *dukkha* as "unsatisfactory" or "unsatisfactori-

ness," rather than using the more familiar translation of "suffering."

16. Sāriputta was considered to be the chief disciple of the Buddha, noted especially for his quick intuition which enabled him to become a *sotāpanna* immediately after hearing the first two lines of the stanza spoken by Assaji. He appears on numerous occasions in the dialogues of the Sutta-piṭaka.

17. Some students of Buddhism contend, and with good reason, that the ethico-moral aspects of Buddhism are of foremost importance. Although Buddhism is not a legalistic religion, it does contain a number of codified sets of rules. The Five Precepts (not to kill, lie, steal, fornicate, or drink intoxicating beverages) apply to all devout laymen, whereas additional prescriptions have special importance for novices, monks and on the Buddhist sabbath days. The heart of the monk's discipline is the *paṭimokkha*, 227 rules repeated at the fortnightly *uposatha* ceremony.

18. The four attachments or four graspings (*upādāna*) arise from sense desires, speculations, belief in rites and rituals, and belief in the theory of a soul or self (*atta*).

19. The two sermons referred to here are considered by Theravāda Buddhists to be the most important delivered by the Buddha in that they contain the basic teachings of the Theravāda tradition. Both sermons are contained in the Mahavagga of the Vinaya-piṭaka or the Book of Discipline.

20. The Four Noble Truths (expounded in Chapter III) are probably the most frequently used synopsis of Theravāda doctrine. Their importance is illustrated by the fact that they occur in the Buddha's first sermon.

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